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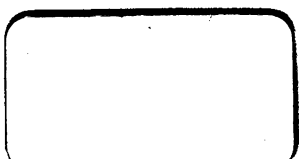
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BESIEGED  
BY THE  
BOERS



(Ashe)

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J. G. F.





**KIMBERLEY.**  
**SIEGE SOUP**

—○—  
*Town Hall Depot.*

**TWO PINTS.**

—○—  
Date.....*February 5, 1900*.....  
Issuer.....*C. C. Asher*.....





# **BESIEGED BY THE BOERS**



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SOME EFFECTS OF A 100-POUND SHELL.

# BESIEGED

By the  
**BOERS**

*A Diary of Life and Events  
in Kimberley during the Siege*

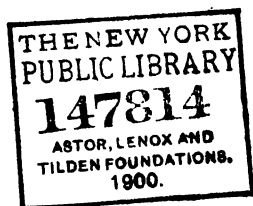
By  
**E. OLIVER ASHE, M.D.,**  
London, F. R. C. S. Eng., Surgeon to the Kimberley Hospital.

**Illustrated**

NEW YORK  
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & CO.

1900

EPB



Copyright, 1900, by  
E. OLIVER ASHL.

TO MY MOTHER

AT HOME IN ENGLAND.

I WROTE THIS DIARY, DAY BY  
DAY, WITH NO IDEA OF EVER PUB-  
LISHING IT. NOW THAT I AM LED  
TO CHANGE MY PLAN, TO HER

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

KIMBERLEY, MARCH 6, 1900.

Kimberley - 27 June 1900 - 1801



**My hearty thanks are due to Mr.  
Marcus Bennett, Mr. C. Evans,  
Mr. F. H. Hancox and Dr.  
Stoney for the photographs with  
which they have kindly per-  
mitted me to illustrate this diary.**

**E. O. A.**

## INTRODUCTION

**KIMBERLEY** is the second largest town in Cape Colony, and is the largest diamond mining centre in the world. It came into existence in 1870 with the discovery of diamonds, and, including its suburbs of Kenilworth, Beaconsfield, and Wesselton, has now a population of about 40,000, of which 25,000 are white. The three principal mines—Kimberley, De Beers, and Wesselton—are worked by the De Beers Consolidated Mines, Limited. This immense Company, of which Mr. Rhodes is the Chairman, has a capital of nearly four millions; pays well over a million a year in wages, and turns out ten thousand pounds' worth of rough diamonds every working day. All Kimberley makes its living directly or indirectly from the Company, and for all practical purposes Kimberley and the Company are one. The town is 647 miles by rail from Cape Town and 485 from Port Elizabeth, and there is no English town nearer than the last named place. The Cape Town to Buluwayo Line passes through

the town, but from the Orange River (77 miles south of Kimberley) it runs for quite 400 miles close to the Orange Free State and Transvaal borders, never more than ten miles, often only two or three away from them. Kimberley itself is about four miles from the border. From its isolated position it could therefore be cut off with the greatest ease, and only relieved with the greatest difficulty, while the chance of looting its shops and well-furnished private houses naturally have had an irresistible attraction for the pious Boer and his still more pious *frouw*.

## MEDICAL COMFORT CERTIFICATE.

Date February 12<sup>th</sup> 1900

Please Supply .....

Name (in full) William Smith Age 28 Years

Address 121 Dutortspan Road

With 1 lb arrowroot

Nature of Complaint dysentery

Signature of Doctor G. Oliver Hohe

Countersigned .....

N.B.—This certificate must be countersigned at the Office in Chapel-street (back of White's Hairdressing Establishment, Dutortspan Road), between the hours of 10 a.m. and 12 noon, and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., and *not* taken to Lennox-street.



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# Order for Milk

to be taken to SCHMIDT'S STORE, Market Sq.  
Hours: 7 a.m. to 12 noon.

Fresh Milk at 7 a.m.  
(Sundays included)

Condensed Milk at 10 a.m.  
(except Sundays)

Name Sarah Jones Age 18 mos

Address 59 Transvaal Road

Quantity { <sup>Fresh or</sup> Condensed } 1 Tin every 5 days

Length of Time (when possible) 2 Weeks

Date 12.2.00

Edwin Ashe

MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

All orders for Fresh or Condensed Milk must be renewed fortnightly.  
Applicant must take a clean jug to the depôt. Charge 3d. per half-bottle.

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# **BESIEGED BY THE BOERS**



## CHAPTER I

### THE BOERS STRIKE FIRST

KIMBERLEY, *November 18, 1899.*

NO one knows when this will get posted, for it is five weeks to-day since we were cut off from the outside world, and though all along we have been hearing of troops on the way to relieve us, they are just as far off as ever for all we know. I think, therefore, that as there will be so much to write about when we are relieved I had better be getting some of it jotted down.

My last letter was written on October 8th, the day after we had had the parade of all our defence forces. Things went along quietly the first part of the next week, though we kept hearing plenty of rumours as to the Boer movements, but on Thursday, October 12th, hostilities really began near Mafeking. Colonel Baden-Powell, who commanded there, seeing that war was inevitable, practically ordered all

the women and children to leave, as he foresaw that the place would be very aggressively attacked.

These non-combatants left in a special train, an armour-plated train escorting it as far as Vryburg. It then started on the return journey. All went well till Kraaipan was reached, about twenty miles this side of Mafeking, where the Boers had torn up the rails so that the train ran off the road and came to a standstill. Then they pounded away at her with rifles and a small field gun until all resistance ceased, after which any men left alive were taken prisoners and carried off.

The first report we got was that the Boers had put a big gun directly in front of the returning train and blown the whole thing to bits, killing every soul in it. This, however, turned out to be untrue, as the engine driver managed to elude the Boers, and got away to Vryburg and gave the correct version. Lieutenant Nesbit, who was in charge of the train, had been warned that the Boers held the line and that it was unsafe for him to return; but I suppose he thought there was just a chance of getting through, and so he risked it. He was reported to be badly wounded, but we have no further news of him as yet.

This business considerably astonished us here



A PEACEFUL SPOT.

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in Kimberley, for though the people further up country all said that war was certain to come, we did not at all believe it. The result of course was to increase the activity of the military, police and town guard, and everything was done to hurry on our defences as quickly as possible. The 13th and 14th passed quietly without any alarm, but late on the night of the 14th (Saturday) a well known man sent for me to come out to see his sick child, and told me news had just come in that the railway had been torn up at Spytfontein, about eight miles south of Kimberley. Next morning, about 6.30 A.M., Stoney came in to tell me that the railway had also been cut at Riverton Road, ten miles north of Kimberley, and the water-works at Riverton had been taken by the Boers and our water supply cut off; so we were practically in a state of siege. The alarm was to sound at about 9 A.M. and every one would have to go to his post. This was nice news, but all we could do was to make the best of it.

My first move was to fill up my big rain-water tank, the big bath, and every available receptacle, so that we should have a reserve to fall back upon in case of need, and most of the people did the same thing.

On the next day notice was given that in order to economise water as much as possible



## 6 BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

(the reservoir in the town only holding enough for about three weeks) the supply would only be turned on from nine to eleven o'clock each morning, and that any one found watering a garden or caught using water for anything except purely domestic and necessary purposes would have his supply permanently cut off, without respect to persons.

Quite early in the morning a big proclamation was issued that from that time forward martial law was in force, and that no one would be allowed out of his house between 9 P.M. and 6 A.M., without a special permit. All sorts of other subjects were touched upon in the proclamation, but that was the most important. I went round doing my work as usual, but at about 11 A.M. the "hooters" gave the alarm, and every one hurried to his post. Many people had been warned and expected the alarm, but in the lower quarters of the town it came as a surprise, and there was quite a panic there. In some of the better streets, too, where a few excitable women lived near each other, there was a good deal of excitement, for the women ran around frightening each other with yarns as to the number of Boers that could be seen advancing and how very easily they could take Kimberley and all the rest of it.

For some time before this the garrison had

been busy putting up earthworks and loopholed forts in the most salient positions all round the town, on the tops of the *débris* heaps, and at the points which commanded the roads, etc. They had also formed a town guard, which nearly all the able-bodied men of all ranks joined, and these men turned out to man the forts. We had only about six hundred regulars here, and about the same number of volunteers and volunteer artillery. These had all been in camp for some days, but as the circle enclosed by the forts was fully thirteen miles in circumference they could not adequately man the forts, so the idea was and has been all along that the town guard should man the forts, while the regulars, volunteers, and artillery were camped in a central position ready to turn out and proceed to any quarter upon which an attack was made.

Rumours kept flying round all the morning, but nothing happened. A patrol of the mounted police went out towards Riverton, and was chased by a superior force of Dutch and had to leave behind two men whose horses were either shot or fell with them. One of the men I knew well, as he was the man from whom I always bought my horns. They were reported shot, but some days after we heard that they had only been made prisoners.

The armoured train went out both sides of

## 8      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

Kimberley, and was fired on and forced to retreat, and so it wore on to night, nothing happening, but many rumours going the rounds.

Just before the outbreak Dr. Fuller decided to send his wife and family away to Cape Town, and he went part of the way with them. He had only just got back when he got a wire that his baby had been killed in an accident near Beaufort West, so off he went on Friday to his wife, passing Dr. Watkins on the way, the latter on his return from an English holiday. On Saturday the railway was cut, and so Fuller could not return, but had to go on to Cape Town, and Watkins took his place to work with me at the hospital.

Another doctor who had only just bought a practice here fled on Saturday. I used to know him some years ago, and thought he was all right; but he has since married a Dutchwoman and degenerated, to all appearances, into a thorough-going Boer. His wife's sister is the wife of a Kimberley lawyer, a prominent Bondsman, and as disloyal as the rest of that ilk. As soon as the trouble began the lawyer cleared out, and is supposed to have taken the doctor with him. He is reported to be with the besieging Boers, but those who know him do not believe he will push far to the front with them, unless they happen to be running away, though



THE ARMoured TRAIN.

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his intimate knowledge of Kimberley may be useful to them. But I imagine the Kimberley people won't patronise that doctor much if he ever has the audacity to re-establish himself here.

Rhodes turned up here too the last day the railway was open. Many people were wild with indignation against him, thinking that he would be an additional inducement to the Boers to attack us, but I think it was very plucky of him to come and stand by the town which made him, and with which he is so intimately connected. He did not stay idle long, but began at once to raise a regiment of his own, the Kimberley Light Horse, paying for everything in connection with them out of his own pocket.

Next day, Monday, October 16th, was much quieter; nothing had been seen or heard of the Dutch, and there were various rumours that relief from Orange River was close at hand, which quieted people down a good deal.

The 17th was not a happy day for us altogether, though we heard that the Boers had been beaten back from Mafeking and lost many men, while nearer home we heard that the people at Vryburg and Warrenton were either too afraid or too disloyal to help the mounted police there, and as the latter were far too few to defend the places successfully without the

## 10      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

townspeople's aid they retired on Kimberley, leaving Vryburg and the Fourteen Streams Bridge at Warrenton over the Vaal River to the Dutch. The captain in charge of the Vryburg men was so broken down at having to retreat that he blew his brains out, a few miles from Vryburg. The men at Fourteen Streams left their tents with lights burning in them, but brought everything else off safely. When morning came the Dutch fired into the deserted camp for two hours, and then sent a Kaffir to see whether any one was left alive! They were surprised to find every one had gone.

The two bodies of police got in safely *via* Barkley on Wednesday, October 18th. Nothing happened except that Agnes' troubles began. Many people had rushed into town on the first day of alarm and had no occupation or means of livelihood, and a relief committee was formed to enquire into their cases and help them if they were deserving. Agnes, always too willing where any unfortunates were to be helped, commenced to work six hours a day in this cause. After a few days she was quite exhausted, so I cut the work down to three, and even that proved too much for her after a couple of weeks. When there was talk of relief, many people declined to work, but tried their best to get food for nothing.

One day over one hundred and sixty natives were told that if they wanted help they must work for it, and stone breaking work was offered them. Three only accepted it. This was a fair example of the style of most of the people who applied for relief.

On Thursday, October 19th, there were all sorts of rumours about as to the railway having been broken all the way down to Hex River, and that the Colonial Dutch had risen to join the Transvaal. This made a run on the provision stores, as, if it was true, it meant that it would be a long time before we could get new supplies of food in. At least most people thought so, forgetting that most of our supplies came *via* Port Elizabeth, which is nearly two hundred miles nearer. Anyhow there was a run on provisions, etc., and the store-keepers naturally put the prices up. Paraffin, which had been selling at 16s. 6d., went up to £3 for a ten-gallon case, and other things in proportion. We had laid by a fair stock of stuff previous to this, but I got in two additional sacks of flour, to be on the safe side.

This tremendous run up of prices made it very hard on the poor, so the military authorities took the matter in hand and issued a proclamation next day that all prices were to be the same exactly as they were before the siege



## 12 BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

began. This was a very good thing, and of course they took good care to see that it was carried out by instituting heavy penalties for any store-keeper who overcharged.

We have had plenty of military proclamations, but most of them have been wise, such as forbidding the sale of liquor to natives except during very limited hours, and later on absolutely prohibiting the sale of liquor to them at all. The bar-keepers did not like this last one, but after one of them had been fined £30 and his bar completely closed till the end of the siege came they saw that they had to obey it.

At about this time my new single-horse trap was completed, and I tried two of my horses in it and found they went very well. I therefore thought that I would sell out all but my best horses, and do the work with three or even two if the keeping of them got to be too dear. I played the rôle of the good citizen by lending one horse to the volunteers, on condition that I was to have him back when things came right. Even if he died or got shot it was better than having him looted by a thieving Boer. I sold another animal to the Light Horse, and found that I could do my work with the three remaining quite well, running a single horse half the day and the old cart with a pair the other half.

About the first day I had the new cart out I

had an amusing experience. After the preliminary alarm the military people blocked all the small streets leading into the town with barricades of old waggons, carts, water-tanks, and other heavy lumber, and where this was not available they put up strong, high, barbed-wire fences, with eight or nine strands.

The main streets were barricaded in just the same way as the small ones, but an opening was left in the centre and a guard, either of volunteers or town guard or police, was put on duty there, with orders to allow no one to pass in or out without a properly signed permit, and even then to search both their carts and pockets if they thought fit. The first day these orders were in force I wanted to see a patient about one hundred yards beyond one of the barriers. I did not know the orders, as no notice of them had been given, and when I got near the barrier I saw carts being stopped, so I said to the man on guard, "Are you going to stop me, too?"

"Yes," he said, "unless you have a permit."

"May I leave my cart here and walk over there to see the patient?"

"No, if you have no permit neither you nor the cart can pass."

So I said, "All right, orders are orders; I will go and get a pass."

The joke was that the man on guard was a

## 14      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

patient of my own and knew me well, but he was quite right.

On more than one occasion Rhodes has been stopped at the barrier and asked for his permit, and at one barrier where the orders were to search everybody, the guards stopped him and told him that he would have to be searched. Rhodes fumed and blustered and said he had never heard of such damned insolence, but the guard was firm, so Rhodes burst out laughing and produced a permit to pass the barrier without being searched. He was just testing the men's discipline. Whatever else he may be, he is no coward; he goes through the barrier and rides far out on the *veldt* almost every afternoon, with only one or two friends and no escort at all. He always wears white flannel trousers, and is most conspicuous. Nothing could save him if a Boer chose to lie in wait and pot him with a long range shot, and as the Mauser rifle which the Boers use carries well over a mile the marksman could be well in among his own people long before any of our soldiers could get a chance at him.

That this could easily happen is shown by what occurred on October 20th. A patrol of the mounted volunteers (Diamond Fields' Horse) was out scouting early in the morning. No Boers were seen anywhere about, when



**KENILWORTH BARRICADE.**



**MR. RHODES'S NOTICE AT THE BARBED-WIRE BARRIER.**

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without warning a shot was fired and one of the sergeants fell off his horse, dead. The men hunted the whole country in the neighbourhood, but could not find a sign or footprint of anybody. The modern rifle fires smokeless powder, so no smoke was seen and no one knows who fired the shot.

On the same day we heard that the Boers had issued a proclamation declaring Bechuanaland to be Transvaal and Griqualand West, Orange Free State territory, but of course our commander, Colonel Kekewich, promptly issued a counter proclamation warning all loyal subjects not to have any faith with such misrepresentations, as these territories were still British in spite of the Boer proclamation.

Kekewich is the colonel in command of the Lancashires; he is a Devonshire man, though his name does not sound like it, and is a splendid fellow. Everybody likes him. He is the head of the whole business, and must have had an anxious time, as he is responsible for everything. I think I mentioned that a lookout tower has been put up on top of the most centrally situated mine head-gear. This must be about one hundred and twenty feet above the street level, and gives a splendid view of all the surrounding country, and here the colonel spends most of his day, watching what the

## 16      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

Boers, and our own men, too, for that matter, are up to. The top of this tower is in telephonic communication with all the forts, so that orders are sent from it to all points with great rapidity. At night there are strong electric search-lights in commanding positions at the forts, and these are at work during all the dark hours, so that it is impossible for the Boers to make any advance without its being known at once. That is the advantage of having an immensely wealthy Company like the De Beers in the place. They have skilled mechanics and electricians and machinery and appliances to do almost anything, and we do not now know what we should have done without them. As a matter of fact, though, we should never have been besieged but for the mines. The Boers openly gave out that they wanted to take Rhodes prisoner and to blow up his mines, and did not wish to injure anybody else.

After the first alarm the De Beers people brought in all or a great part of their cattle from their outlying farms and herded about fifteen hundred of them just outside Kenilworth. Having failed to do much by cutting off our water supply, the enemy thought they would try for our food supply next, and I suppose their natural love of cattle stirred them up, too, for if there is anything for which a Boer will risk his life it is cattle.

## CHAPTER II

### FIGHTING AND RAIDING

ON Tuesday, October 24th, a patrol of our men was out, and ran across a strong force of Boers, whose object was evidently to raid cattle. A brisk engagement ensued about six miles out, and re-enforcements went out to our men; but, owing to their being guided by a man who did not know the ground well, they got into difficulties, and were attacked by a body of Boers who had taken up their position behind the bank of a dry dam, the existence of which the guide was ignorant. The colonel, seeing there was likely to be a defeat, sent out some of the Lancashires in the armoured train, and they promptly drove out the Boers, converting what was very nearly a disaster into a drawn game. The Boers drew off and so did we. The casualties on our side were pretty large—three killed and about twenty-five wounded, four of them severely. Out of the wounded, three were officers, two of them badly hit, the bullets splinter-



## 18      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

ing the thigh bone in both cases. The Boer loss was not and never will be known, but must have been pretty heavy. The only certain thing about it was that their commandant was killed. He was left on the field when the Boers retired, and being a man from Boshof and well known in Kimberley he was easily identified by our people. He was in Kimberley on the Saturday afternoon that all the forces were reviewed, and is reported to have rather sneered at the show, saying it would just be a comfortable handful for the Boers. He met his death early, and, as he was well known and popular among the Boers, his death must have disconcerted them considerably.

We had a pretty busy time at the hospital when the wounded came in. I got five of them under my hands, but only two were more than trifles—an officer shot through the chest, and a sergeant shot through the arm, splintering up the bone. We doctors had all of us seen a few bullet wounds with revolvers and such like, but had no experience of the modern rifle bullet, and it was a revelation to us. The bullet, especially of the Mauser rifle which the Dutch use, is so small and travels with such velocity that it drills clean through everything, and unless it strikes a vital part or hits a bone or big artery the injury it inflicts is ridiculous. The officer shot

through the chest left the hospital on the eighth day, and returned to duty on the ninth, though this consisted of at least twelve miles' riding every day. Wounds through the fleshy parts heal in a couple of days, and give no trouble after a week. But a Mauser bullet will drive clean through anything. One poor chap in another engagement was shot in the ribs of the right side far back, and the bullet travelled right through him in a slanting direction and came out at the outer side of the left thigh about its middle, cutting the spine right across on its way and completely paralysing him. He only lived a few hours. Another bullet in this Dronfield fight of which I have been speaking hit the ammunition box of the Maxim gun. The ammunition is carried in a stout canvas belt, like the leather bandolier. The box is strong and the cartridges are solid brass (not cardboard), and yet the bullet drove through the box and through no less than ten cartridges with the intervening twenty thicknesses of canvas, and none of the cartridges exploded.

After this brush things were very quiet for several days. We got news of some of the Natal fights, and heard that the Boers had been repulsed from Mafeking every time they tried to take it, which encouraged us a good deal. There were many disquieting rumours though

## 20      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

as to the strength of the Boers, and the big siege guns they were bringing to bombard us with. The alarmists talked glibly about forty pounders, though our artillerymen told us that a forty pounder is so heavy that it would take about seventy mules or oxen to drag it. This, however, was a detail which the alarmists ignored.

From the 8th of October on we had beautiful rains at intervals of a few days, and the water came in very handy. I got in another big water-tank, and arranged my water-pipes to run into it. During each rain I filled every available receptacle, just like old times at home. Our garden was coming on beautifully when we had to give up watering it, but the rains kept it just going, and I managed to keep the vines and vegetables alive with bath and refuse water. At first we filled the tanks and kept them as a reserve in case the water in the reservoir gave out before we were relieved, but by the time we had been shut up about three weeks the De Beers Company, as usual, came to the rescue.

One of their mines, the Wesselton, has a big stream of underground water in it, and this water has for the last year or two been pumped into a dam at Kenilworth, from which it is taken to the floors and used for washing "the



THE CONNING TOWER.

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blue" or diamondiferous earth. In one place this water-main ran close to the water company's main, so De Beers put on a gang of Kaffirs and joined the two, after which he was able to pump from The Wesselton to the reservoir. So we had a good supply of water once more, much harder than our regular supply from the Vaal River, but quite good all the same, and sufficient for all purposes except watering gardens. After this supply was fixed up we felt safe in using any rain-water we saved for the garden, and did so; but a good many of the shallow-rooted things had died, though the vegetables were flourishing. The first rumour about the water-works had been that the Boers had blown the pumping machinery up on the first day of the siege, but later this turned out to be incorrect. They took possession of it and were going to blow it up, but the wily engineer, who was captured at the same time, is reported to have said, "Why do you destroy your own property? When you have taken Kimberley you will want a water supply just the same, and it will cost a good deal to replace the machinery." He went on to suggest that they could cut off the Kimberley water, and do themselves a good turn at the same time, by pulling up the pipes at a place six miles from the river, where they ran through a pan which

## 22      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

had water in it only after very heavy rains. Then they could pump river water into this pan, and thus have a watering place for their horses much nearer Kimberley. The Boers were agreeable to this plan and carried it out. Of course the engineer's idea was to try and save the pumps if possible. But the Boers have laid dynamite ready to blow them up if they have to retreat, and they probably will do so unless the engineer manages to wet the dynamite.

The hotel-keeper at Riverton, where we have stayed several times, is said to be doing a roaring trade, as the Boers are paying him for all they take, but this was arranged by the commandant who was shot. He was a great friend of the hotel-keeper's. Whether this state of things will go on now nobody knows, but the Boers are quite equal to demanding every penny he has and then shooting him when they retreat. That is what one is afraid of for the outlying people. So long as all goes well with them, the Boers may be fairly civil, but when they are beaten and have to retreat there is no dastardly cruelty that they will not do. The cowardly brutes have said that in that case they intend to shoot men, women, and children. On the other hand, if they were to win, their programme, as laid down by their own rabble, is

"to shoot all the Englishmen and to give their women to the Kaffirs." These are the people of whom Olive Schreiner writes, "the simple, God-fearing farmer," etc.

All this time we were of course under martial law, and not allowed out between nine and six without a permit. Many special constables were sworn in and patrolled the streets at night in pairs, one with a rifle and the other with a revolver. At first they were very energetic, and it was "Halt, who goes there? Advance one at a time and give the countersign" at about every hundred yards. After a week or two they quieted down a bit, but are still fairly lively, particularly if you are in a cab driving at night.

After the Dronfield fight on October 24th nothing happened in the War Department for a long time, but I was pretty busy medically, and a case of smallpox developed down in Beaconsfield which made rather a scare, but the man and his friend who shared his room were promptly taken out to the Lazaretto and no further cases developed.

On the 31st we received our first intimation that the Boers had got some artillery with them, as they fired some shots from a field gun at a patrol of our men which was out in the Free State direction to the north-east of Kimberley, but no one was hit. On November 1st about



## 24      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

2 P.M. we heard a tremendous explosion, and on looking about saw a huge column of smoke to the north over the dynamite magazines, so we guessed that the Boers had blown up the De Beers stock of dynamite, and this afterwards turned out to be true. This dynamite had been stored in the town, but the town council got scared that if the bombardment took place and a shell struck it, it would blow the whole town to bits, so they had it removed some distance out. The De Beers people used to fetch in what they wanted every day, but on this same morning the Boers had fired on them when they were going out, and so they had to return without any. The Company was very angry with the town council about this, because they said that they could have kept the dynamite with perfect safety inside the town limits by dividing it up into small lots and keeping these in separate places. The mines had to be shut down very soon after this for want of dynamite, but it did not really make much difference, as they ran short of fuel only a few days after. On this same day, too, we started on brown bread by military order. There was a far larger stock of coarse meal than of flour in the town, so the colonel ordered the making of white bread to cease, and all the bread to be made of three fourths meal and one fourth

flour. On the second a smaller dynamite magazine was blown up, but it only made a very small explosion compared with the first one.

On this day a Jewish patient of mine amused me very much. He had a store out at Wind-sorton, but he and his family lived in Kimberley. He had managed to get out to his store to see how things were going on, the Boers not interfering with him beyond frightening him with their boasting. They told him that they had shelled Mafeking and killed everybody in it, and that they were going to do the same for Kimberley. He came straight back to fetch his wife and family out to the store "for safety," though his wife had been confined only a fortnight before. He must have been badly scared, for he said the Boers had commandeered £100 of goods from his store, but "that was nothing." For a Hebrew to call £100 nothing means that he is out of his head with terror. I asked him what the Dutch said of the Dronfield fight, and he replied that they had told him they had killed forty English, wounded one hundred, and captured one hundred and fifty horses.

"You know yourself," I said, "that four were killed and twenty-five wounded that day, so how can you believe them in other things when they lie so frightfully about the things you do know?" To my great surprise, he decided to

stay in town, but I did not at all expect he would be so sensible.

The next day, November 3d, was a very anxious day. The alarm sounded at 10 A.M., the Boers again trying to raid the Kenilworth cattle, but after a good deal of long range firing they were driven off, only one man of ours being wounded. The men had just got in when another attack seemed likely on the opposite side of the town. There was pretty heavy fighting there for a couple of hours, and we got our first sound of artillery fire, our guns backing up our mounted men and blazing away well. Between them they managed to drive the Boers off, with two men on our side wounded. Dr. Watkins got a man wounded through the right lung, who ultimately did quite well, and I got a poor chap who was shot in the side of the head, and who died on the operating table as I was seeing if anything could be done for him.

The sanitary system here is a pail system; all the closets have pails, and these are taken away and fresh ones put in every other night. The full pails are carted away in big covered vans, that always remind me of the menagerie vans that used to come through Garton on the way from Roos to Aldborough. There are a good many of these vans, and they take a lot of oxen to draw them. The work is done by

short-sentence native prisoners under proper guards. Vans, oxen, and natives, in fact, the whole plant, are kept at a big compound a mile from town. On this afternoon the Boers made their attack from this quarter, and began by raiding all the vans and the oxen that pulled them. This looked like altogether disorganising the sanitary service, and in the afternoon edition of the paper (a piece the size of a single sheet of note-paper, price 3*d.*) a request was issued to all householders to dig holes three feet deep in their gardens or yards and empty their pails into them, adding a covering of earth. This looked all right, but how to dig a three-foot hole when eighteen inches brought you down to solid rock, as it does in some parts of the town, was not explained by the authorities. Then again, for every man who would carry this scheme out properly there would certainly be ten who were too idle or careless to bother about it. On the face of it this plan was no good. I did my own scavenger work for one day, but the sanitary contractors soon managed to carry out their work with another plant, and so this difficulty was tided over.

On the next day everything started quiet, but the De Beers steam "hooter" sounded at noon because a party of Boers was hovering round Wesselton in a threatening way. Our

## 28      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

people dropped a few shells about them, and they concluded that they did not want Wesseltown as badly as they had thought. On this day (November 4th) we heard of the twelve hundred men in Natal who had pursued the Boers too far and been obliged to surrender when their ammunition gave out, and very sick we felt about it. I also heard of the packet of dynamite that had been found under the big bridge in the centre of the town. A policeman approaching the bridge had noticed some men, who scuttled away as he came near, leaving a parcel behind them which turned out to be dynamite. As a matter of fact, unless a hole had been drilled deep and the dynamite properly sunk in it there was not enough to burst the bridge. But it showed plainly what we all knew well, that we had traitors in the camp.

When the trouble first began and martial law was proclaimed a court-martial was established. Its members were partly army officers and partly civilians. The civilians were the Resident Magistrates of Kimberley and Beaconsfield, the Civil Commissioner of Kimberley, and one of the High Court Judges. This court tried all people who broke the martial law provisions, such as those who were out after hours without permit, who broke through the barriers or had arms in their possession illegally, or who were in any way in communication with the Boers.

In theory the constitution of the court seemed all right, but in practice it was absurd. The military members were too full of more important work to attend, and so the civilians had it all their own way. They were all men who had to do with civil law cases, and consequently were always wanting minute and conclusive evidence before they convicted a man. That is all right in civil work, but is no use in a case like ours. What was wanted was a court of men who knew no law, but understood common sense. A court like this would have decided that if there was the shadow of suspicion against a man it would be safe to jail him out of harm's way until the siege was over. But this court was ruled by the superior officer of the others in ordinary times, and most offenders were dismissed with a caution. Everybody was very disgusted with the court in consequence. On one occasion some men were seen on a *débris* heap waving flags to the Boers, while they (the Boers) were actually firing shells into the town. The police arrested the men, and then this extraordinary court asked the police whether they could positively swear that their captives were the men who waved the flags. As the heap was half a mile off, of course the police could not swear to them, so they were dismissed with the usual caution.

On this same day (November 4th) there was

## 30      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

a rumour that the Boers had sent an "ultimatum" to the colonel, that if he did not surrender in twenty-four hours they would bombard the town. Whether true or not this yarn was widely believed, and many people expected the shelling would begin at daybreak on the sixth, but it did not. They fired two shells at sunset at Wesselton mine, and we thought we were in for a night bombardment. The hooters sounded and every one turned out to his post, but nothing happened. This was the last we heard of the hooters, and everybody was glad of it. It was a weird, ghastly sounding alarm, and scared nervous people out of their senses, so the colonel stopped it and instituted a cone alarm, like a wind cone on a pier, but so far I have never seen it. The hooter was the same one that was used to tell the miners their time, and we were used to two blasts from it when the shifts changed three times a day, but the three blasts frequently repeated during this part of the siege fairly gave one the horrors, especially at night. It will be a long time before we forget those three blasts, and when things are settled and we start our usual two again it will be some time before we give up pricking up our ears and listening for the third hoot when we hear the first two.



SEARCH AND SIGNAL LIGHT AT WESSELTON.



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## CHAPTER III

### THE BOMBARDMENT BEGINS

OUR long-expected bombardment began on the next day, November 7th, and it was a feeble business. The Boers fixed a gun on a *kopje* about four miles out Spytfontein way, and commenced trying to shell us. They fired about twenty in all, and no damage whatever was done. A very few, only two or three, reached the town, and they fell in the street and no injury whatever was done either to people or property. The gun was so far off that we could not hear much of a report when it was fired, and the shells burst with an insignificant noise, that is, when they did burst at all, the majority of them being defective. The corruption of the Boer Government had recoiled on itself, and whoever supplied the shells had supplied apparently an inferior quality of old explosives, charging, no doubt, full price for them. Report says that some of the shells which did not

## 32      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

burst were filled with sawdust instead of powder, but I do not know whether this is really true or not. One shell fell in the street where my office is, but about one hundred and fifty yards higher up. It is said to have exploded within a few yards of an Irish policeman, but all the notice he took of it was to remark, "Fwhat will they be playin' at next?" For the truth of this, however, I will not be responsible either. Several of these shells fell not far from the house of a patient of mine, which is in a prominent position and easy to see from a distance, but the lady of the house sat quietly on the veranda without turning a hair, being rather amused than otherwise. She gave me a chunk of one of the shells as a memento.

Next day we were awakened before six by three cannon shots which sounded very close, and after the shot we could hear the shell explode each time, so we thought that the Boers had got hold of a better lot of shells and really meant business this time, but it turned out afterwards that it was our own guns firing.

On the ninth Agnes started with influenza, and had to give up her refugee work at last. I was very busy and could not look after her much myself, so I got a nurse to attend to her, and she recovered in a few days. The tenth was a quiet day. No bombarding took place.

## THE BOMBARDMENT BEGINS 33

But the armoured train was fired on by the Boers as it attempted to reconnoitre to the northward. Next day, the eleventh, we had a pretty hot time. The Boers had brought their guns nearer and to a different position, and began shelling at 5.15 A.M. They had got the range by this time, and almost every shell landed in the town. I had to go out early to a case, and went down into the main road opposite the end of the house and stood talking there to a friend who had been watching the shells falling farther up the town. I was only out about a quarter of an hour, and had just got into the garden when I heard the Boer cannon fire, and in a few seconds the unmistakable "whiz" of the shell, followed at once by its explosion, let me know that the trouble was mighty near. I went out to see where it had burst, and found it was in the main road close by. One piece struck a Kaffir woman on the back of the head and knocked her brains out, and she fell on the pavement and died in a few minutes, not a hundred yards from our house in a straight line, in Dutoitspan Road near the Club. Another woman who was walking with her was not touched. Another piece of the shell cut a thick branch off a tree exactly where I had stood talking to my friend a quarter of an hour before. This was getting near with a

### 34. BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

vengeance, and I did not at all like it, as our house stood a good chance of getting hit, being two storied, while all the others around it were only one story high. However, though they shelled away for two hours in the morning and two more in the afternoon, nobody else was touched, and no other shell came as near as this one. After this the Boers kept their guns in the same position and fired at us in a half-hearted sort of way every day (except Sunday) for a whole week. We had shells in town on the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th. They generally began soon after daylight and went on for an hour or two, till they got tired or possibly till they knocked off for breakfast, and they usually recommenced for an hour or two in the afternoon. During the seven days of active bombardment they fired at least seven hundred shells into the town, and the amount of damage done both to life and property was so small that it would hardly be believed.

Besides the Kaffir woman, no one was killed, but a Dutchwoman died of fright when a shell burst near her house. A Dutchman, too, was driving a fare in his cab when a shell dropped on his horses, killing one outright and breaking his own arm but not damaging the fare in the least. One morning early I was rung up and an unmistakable Hebrew voice yelled up my

## THE BOMBARDMENT BEGINS 35

speaking tube, "Come down at once; a shell has went through my arm." It was not probable that he had much arm left after this, but I found that it was only a splinter of the shell after all. He had been lying in bed and a shell dropped through the roof and burst in his room, a small piece of it going through the fleshy part of his arm, without touching the bone. Another man was said to have been grazed by a splinter on the same day, and this is the sum-total of the personal damage done by all those shells. On the other hand, the narrow escapes were numerous, and some of them were miraculous. One day a shell came into the Queen's Hotel. It just missed the dining-room, where thirty people were at lunch, and dropped into the pantry adjoining it. As luck would have it there were no waiters in the pantry just then, but there were two cats, both of which were killed and the crockery smashed. I believe one man of the thirty stayed to finish his lunch. On another day, when the shells were falling near the house of a patient of mine, he and his daughters went to the front door to see what was happening. A shell came through the end of the house, across one room, through the wall, across the passage, through another wall, and into the bowels of a piano which was standing up against the wall, and there burst. It crossed the pas-

### 36 BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

sage within eight feet of the people, not one of whom was even scratched. Another shell came through a roof into a room adjoining a bedroom where a patient of mine was lying ill, and exploded there without doing him the slightest injury. I have a piece of this one to make a brooch for Agnes.

One shell fell in an office on the chair where a man had been sitting writing not a minute before. Another fell in Dr. Mathias' front garden, just in front of a window while he and two other men were having lunch inside. Another fell on the footpath in front of a tobacconist's shop in the main street at a most frequented corner, and burst without even breaking the window. Another went through the English Church. Another wrecked a small house where one of the club waiters lived, but as the house was in a rather hot corner for shells he had removed his family and furniture only the day before. All the time this shelling was going on it was rather nervous work getting to one's patients in the part of the town where the shells were falling. Most of them came from the same direction, and if you were on foot when the gun went off you had plenty of time and knew just where to shelter, but driving about was different, as you did not hear the gun, the rattle of the cart hiding the sound.

## THE BOMBARDMENT BEGINS 37

One day I was coming across the Market Square when they were firing, and I suddenly saw a puff of smoke and cloud of dust in the middle of the street about one hundred yards in front of me, where a shell had burst. As several had landed in the same neighbourhood, I turned up a side street, as I did not want to get my head caved in. Lots of shells fell in our forts, but we put up bomb-proof shelters in them, and not a man was touched. Eighteen fell into one little fort in one afternoon. Our men got quite expert in dodging the shells. You heard the gun boom, and a few seconds after the "whiz" of the shell came, and you ducked close under a wall or earth bank or shelter of any sort that was handy till the shell burst; immediately afterwards every one in the neighbourhood tore frantically towards it to pick up the pieces, for which there was a ready sale, and good pieces, such as the bottom or the conical point with the brass fuse in it, would fetch from one to two pounds. It was really laughable to see the shell hunters on the lookout when the firing was hot, and tearing up to the place where the shells burst to collar the bits. In more than one instance lawsuits were threatened over the ownership of such pieces of a shell.

Finding how little damage was done, we



soon began to treat the bombardment with calm indifference, and on the hottest days shelling did not create the alarm that even the hooters used to do. We became quite learned in shells, too, and talked glibly of shrapnel and ring shells, and time fuses and percussion fuses, and all the rest of it. The one they were most liberal with and which we got to know best was the ring or segment shell. This was about seven inches long, three inches in diameter, and bluntly conical in shape. It consisted of a pipe of rings like cog-wheels, but with a large space in the centre, the cogs being held together only by very narrow bridges of iron. They are made of very brittle cast iron, piled one on top of another to the required height, the top ones getting gradually smaller to give the necessary conical shape. Round this pile a thin coating of iron is cast, and then the incomplete shell is smoothed off in a lathe, leaving a smooth thin coat of cast iron holding the cogs in position. The hollow in the centre of the cog-wheels is then filled with gunpowder, and just before it is fired the fuse is screwed into the point. This point is a brass tube about three inches long and about as thick as an ordinary candle. Inside it contains a percussion cap with a spike so arranged that it fires the cap when the nose of the shell strikes anything hard. There are

two copper bands round the shell. The one near the base we found to be corrugated, a fact due to the rifling in the cannon; the other one is quite plain. These bands fit themselves to the grooves in the gun, being soft metal and not damaging it as the iron would do. The corrugated one is the one we make brooches of. When the shell bursts the cog-wheels are supposed to split up into the separate cogs, and these should in theory "spread death and destruction on all sides." As practised by the Boers, however, they seem to be a particularly harmless sort of firework. Our artillery officers tell us this is because the Boers are using their guns at the extreme range to which they will carry, and that if they used them at two thirds the distance we should be anything but amused by them. The powder inside the shell is only enough to burst the case, but not to hurl the fragments apart with any degree of force. If, however, the shell bursts while it still has a high velocity the pieces go on with the same velocity, and are very dangerous.

Shrapnel is designed on a different plan. It does not have to strike to cause explosion, but is arranged to burst in the middle of its flight, and instead of cog-wheels contains several hundred bullets, which scatter and really do considerable execution. But these shells are very

## 40      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

much heavier than the other kind on account of the bullets, and so will only travel about half the distance that the others do, therefore though a few were fired when our men were out near the Boers, I don't think any ever reached the town.

When first there was any rumour of trouble with the Transvaal the government persistently denied that anything of the kind was possible, and all through steadily refused to let guns or police or ammunition or soldiers come up to Kimberley. In fact, they hindered any defence preparations here in every way they could. As a result, our regular soldiers are less than six hundred in number, and the best guns we have are seven pounders (*i.e.*, the weight of the shell they throw is seven pounds). The Boers have all sorts of guns, even up to one hundred pounders, though the largest they have used against Kimberley has been a twelve pounder. The range of the gun increases with the weight of the projectile, and so the result is that the Boers can place their guns well out of the reach of ours, and throw shells into the town with perfect safety. Our men are too few to sally out and take their guns, but whenever our guns managed to get within range of the Boers their firing was splendid—far and away more accurate than theirs. If we had had two fifteen



BOER SHRAPNEL SHELL, WITH TIME FUSE.

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pounders not a shell would have ever come into the town, and if we had had two thousand men instead of seven hundred no siege would have ever taken place.

All the bombardment of the town came from the north-west, and the people who lived in that quarter were advised to come into the town out of reach of the shells. They took up their quarters in schools and halls and other available places, and were overcrowded and generally uncomfortable. After a week of it they decided that the comforts of their own homes, even at the risk of being killed by the shells, were preferable, and so all of them, except a few of the most nervous, went back.

To be safe they dug pits in their gardens or back yards, and roofed them with firewood or old iron and put a couple of layers of bags, full of earth on top, and then piled loose earth on the top of these, so that when any shelling began they could take shelter in the pit and be safe. Numbers of people had to turn out of their homes on account of the siege, as they lived outside the line of forts and so were liable to be shot by our own people as well as by the Dutch in case of attack, and might be rushed and looted at any time even when there was no general attack. All the Kenilworth people came into town early in the siege, and are still un-

## 42      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

able to go home (it is now December 7th). Then the natives who lived in two outside villages were turned out and sent to a place within the forts, as their *kraals* were liable to give cover to an attacking force, and their huts flattened out and destroyed. In several instances good houses were razed to the ground for the same reason, and in front of one fort all the garden fences, etc., were cut down, so that the Boers could not dodge behind them in case of attack. On the whole, our people took very thorough precautions when the war really did begin, but many still say that if the Boers had attacked a week sooner they could have taken the town with the greatest of ease.

All this has brought me no farther than November 11th, the day on which the bombardment really started. On that day our men (the cavalry, that is, for infantry are no use against mounted Boers) went out and had a brush with the enemy. One of ours was killed, and from subsequent native reports we think several Boers were slain. But our men were at a disadvantage, as they always were in these sorties, for all round the town the bush had been cleared and the Boers could see them coming and take cover and wait till they got within range, and then blaze away. If the enemy could have plucked up courage to attack the town our men

## THE BOMBARDMENT BEGINS 43

would have been under cover and the Boers in the open, but that is not in the least their style of tactics.

None of us liked these sorties, as they exposed our men too much, and as the Boers would not give them an opportunity to get at them, so we had to take a chance now and then to prevent them getting too aggressive. Nothing else happened until the fourteenth, when there were rumours of an ultimatum from the Boer commandant to Colonel Kekewich, giving him twenty-four hours in which to surrender the town, or he would bombard it. At the time we hardly believed this, but later on it turned out to have been quite true, as in a Dutch paper which was found on one of the prisoners whom our men took later on there was the full text of the commandant's letter and Kekewich's reply. The latter was to the effect that if the commandant wanted Kimberley he had better come and take it, and, further, that as the Boers had been using the white flag treacherously, the officers had orders to fire on all such flags in future. This was because the Boers, with their usual deceit, had been using the white flag to get into better cover and to take other unfair advantages of us. In the first fight they sent a white flag out, and when one of our men went out to meet it the Dutchman asked



## 44      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

how many men there were out on our side, were they police or volunteers or regulars, and many such unlawful questions. Naturally, our men told them to go to devil and find out, but the Dutch took advantage of the parley to take up a better position.

Again when our ambulance waggons were out bringing in the wounded at any of the fights, I think I am correct in stating that the Boers invariably fired at them when they were within range, though each waggon carried the red-cross flag.

On the sixteenth our men had another brush to the north-west, one of them being killed and eight wounded. I only got one of the wounded this time, as it was early in the morning and the message to fetch me got muddled somehow, so I was a little late at the hospital. My man had four holes in him, all from one bullet. It went through the outer side of his left thigh and through his left hand, too, which was resting on his thigh at the time, but only one of the small bones of his hand was broken, so he was soon all right again. On the seventeenth I had rather a slack afternoon, so we got Dr. Stoney to show us over the forts to which he was doctor up at the Waterworks Reservoir. When we arrived the shells were dropping near the reservoir, so we went out on the veldt to



THE KIMBERLEY RESERVOIR DURING THE SIEGE.

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## THE BOMBARDMENT BEGINS 45

one side of it and looked on a long way off at a brush which was going on in another direction.

Our men were out and trying to draw the Boers, but as usual they did not succeed. Our seven pounders were on a *débris* heap and were firing over the heads of our men at the Boers, who were far away, hidden in a water-course. The rifle firing was tremendous, almost entirely from the Boers as we learned later, and it sounded as if there would be a great many wounded as a result, but such was not the case. Only one of our men was hit in the calf of the leg—not a serious wound. Whether any Dutch were killed we did not know, in fact, that was a thing we never did know. The Dutch papers we secured from time to time gave full accounts of several of these skirmishes, and generally said, “our loss was one man slightly wounded, but the English suffered tremendously.” In an out-of-the-way corner would be the notice, “Franz De Beers, who was killed in the fight at Kimberley on such a date, was the son of so and so.” This occurred more than once in the same paper. Certainly the Boers were smart in getting away their killed and wounded, but of course they were in their own lines. They did not advance to meet us as a rule, but let us go to them, which is part of the usual Boer tactics. They say, too, that the Boers remove their dead

## 46      BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

by the primitive and crude method of putting a rope round the bodies and dragging them off at a gallop behind a horse.

After watching the fight I have been speaking of, we went on to the reservoir, as the firing had ceased. We saw the guns and shells, and the officer in charge explained them to us. There has been more firing at the reservoir than at any other place, either because the Boers want to disable our guns or to burst the reservoir tank and let out the water. Many shells have fallen harmlessly into the water, and some even have struck the bank, but nobody was hurt. The guns are intact, and the reservoir is as sound as it was.

## CHAPTER IV

"WITH C. J. RHODES' COMPLIMENTS."

ABOUT this time the De Beers Company began to turn its attention to the making of shells. We had a very good supply, but not knowing how long we were going to be shut up the Company thought they might as well be making some, and very well they succeeded. Their shells, though perhaps not so nicely finished as those turned out at Woolwich, gave every satisfaction to our artillery officers. Each shell was stamped "with C. J. R.'s comps." The Company turned out about sixty a day, so we had no fear that shells would run short. Ever since we were shut in we kept hearing all sorts of rumours as to the date when our relief column would arrive. Even after three days we had "reliable" news that it was at Modder River, but as time went on these reports became more and more inaccurate. Every one had "definite information" as to the date when it

would arrive, and every one's date was different. At last we came to the conclusion we would expect it when we saw it. Things went along quietly without much happening. Most days there was a little shooting between our patrols and the Boers, generally without any damage being done, and at other times a few shells were fired either at the people guarding our cattle or at Wesselson. We had got used to these shells and did not mind them much, but on some days, when the wind was in the right quarter, the report of the gun and "whiz" of the shell sounded very close.

Our bedroom faced the quarter from which most of the shells came, and sometimes when the guns woke me up and sounded very close I used to think they were too near to be pleasant. Downstairs in the hall even if a shell had come into the house I don't think it would have touched us, as it would have had to pierce two good brick walls, which I did not think possible at the range from which they were fired.

On the twenty-fourth Agnes and I had quite a little excitement. I heard from Mackenzie that the men in one or two of the forts were loaded with all sorts of presents from the townspeople, but that those in out-of-the-way quarters had been neglected. I laid in twenty pounds of Transvaal tobacco and two hundred cigars,



ROYAL ARTILLERY IN ACTION AT THE RESERVOIR.



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and went round to these forts. At one of them that looked north we had quite a bit of fun. The men were very polite and showed us everything, a Maxim gun amongst others, and explained the way it was worked. We had some field glasses with us, and could see the Boers moving around the veldt about a mile and three quarters away between their head camp and the railway.

Presently the armoured train went out, and the Boers fired a gun at it. The gun was about the same distance from us as from the railway and they fired across us, so we could see the shots well. They fired six shots at the train, but only one went near it. Then they fired a last shot, and this time they had swung the gun round and fired at our fort. Of course it was too far off for us to see how the gun pointed, but we saw the flash and puff of smoke, and heard the whiz of the shell evidently coming our way. We did not have much time to think, but the men all yelled to us to crouch down behind the rampart, and the shell struck and burst about one hundred yards away, but quite harmlessly. Then a message came from the conning tower that every one was to leave the fort, except those actually on duty, so we had to take our departure.

Later on in the afternoon I went up to the

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top of the conning tower and had a look round. There is a splendid view from there, but I only had a few minutes to spare and it is necessary to be up there hours to take in all the country round. Things look so different from such an elevated point as this. When the trouble is over I will go up and spend an afternoon there with a glass, and take in everything quietly.

On the next morning (November 25th) we were awakened about five o'clock by heavy gun firing, and soon after heavy rifle firing began, so I knew there would soon be some wounded about. I got up and went down to the hospital about six, and Watkins turned up soon after. We waited about a little, and then, as there was no news of any wounded, were just going off to a bit of high ground near the hospital to see if we could see anything of what was going on. Just then a telephone message came to say that we were to go out to where the fighting was going on, as more doctors were wanted. It did not seem the right order, as we knew that there would be wounded coming in presently, and our allotted post was at the hospital; however, it was an order, so off we went. Watkins had a bicycle, but mine was out of order and I was walking. I walked along without meeting a conveyance of any sort, till at last I got hold of a milk cart, which took me about a quarter of a mile, and then at length I found a cab.

I went out as far as I could go, and came up after a while with an ambulance. We got a little way beyond the barrier when I met some of our men coming in with about a score of Dutch prisoners:

A little farther on I met some more of them, and the men who were bringing them in told me that I ran a danger of being shot if I went further out. However another ambulance was still ahead, so on I went after it. The rifle firing had been falling off a good deal, and by the time I caught the ambulance it had practically stopped. Three or four ambulances were just starting for the hospital, and every one seemed to have been attended to, but they brought a Boer along with a bad wound in his head, and I bandaged him up and sent him back in one of them.

The ambulances were on the road just under the crest of a hill, and a good lot of our men were scattered on both sides of the road also under the brow of the hill. Dr. Watkins was somewhere about. I saw his bicycle on the roadside, but could not see him. After waiting for a little time orders came from the colonel that our ambulance was to move off to the left, keeping under cover of the hill, so we went along over the veldt for a few hundred yards, and then a pretty smart rifle fire began again, directed at the men near whom we were.

Then we got an order to draw off home with the ambulance, as our men were going to retire. This being the case, I did not see that I was doing any good there, and I knew that a lot of wounded had gone along to the hospital, where there was only the junior house surgeon left to receive them, Russell having gone out with the army doctor to see the fun. So I concluded to get back to the hospital as soon as I could.

I took a bee line across the open to my cab, a little exposed to the fire that still continued. Five or six bullets whistled over me, probably not aimed at me at all, but I have no doubt they would have laid me out quite as effectually if they had hit me in the right spot. These small-bore bullets made a tiny little whiz, more like a big mosquito than anything else, and did not sound as if they could possibly hurt.

I got back to the cab all right and went straight along to the hospital, and found, as I had expected, a great quantity of wounded and no one to look after them. I set to work at once, and Watkins and some more of the doctors soon turned up, so we got them ship-shape before long. I had some bad cases this time. One poor youngster of eighteen was shot in the abdomen, and his bowel was cut open about ten times. I had to cut one piece about ten inches long clean out and to stitch up a lot of other

places, but I felt that he had no chance and sent for his people, and told them so at once. He died about six hours after. His father and mother had left when the war scare began, but he would not go. He stayed and joined the Light Horse.

Another man fell to me with a badly broken arm, the bone being very much shattered, and another with a bullet clean through his liver. Another had a bullet in his thigh, which I cut out and have kept, together with a big bullet I picked up on the veldt. Our loss was six killed and twenty-nine wounded, but we believe that the Boers lost very heavily, and we took thirty-five prisoners. I forgot to say that two badly wounded Boers fell to me at the hospital, but I did not bother about them much until I had seen to our men. Both of them were rather severely hit, but they did well and were not long in the hospital. As soon as they were able to get up I had them transferred to the jail hospital, as they could easily escape from the big hospital. The man whose head I bandaged up on the field was seriously damaged. In fact Shield said that when he took off my bandage about a third of the man's brains fell out, and this is very nearly the absolute truth. Even at that, he lived three days.

The result of the day's fight was that our

men drove the Boers off the ridge from which they had been shelling the town, with heavy loss, but as strong re-enforcements of Boers came up they very wisely retired and did not attempt to hold the position.

Watkins got out a few minutes before I did and was right up in the firing line while the fire was still very hot, but he came out all right. Some well-known men were hit in this fight. One poor chap (he is one of the three men who rent my old house) got the middle part of his lower jaw smashed into splinters. It is a horrid wound, not dangerous to life, but I am afraid the deformity will be very bad.

Most of the Boer prisoners were of the very lowest class, and came from Bloemhof, a little Transvaal town not far from Christiana, where I have been several times. Two, at least, of them came from Barkley West, where they had been working in some relief work that the government had started for the benefit of poor whites. Some of these prisoners had Free State newspapers on them which gave us later news than any we had been able to get.

These papers printed a letter from the commandant who was bombarding Kimberley in which he said he had aimed his shells at the middle of the town to "do as much damage as possible."



INSPECTION OF BOERS, BOSMAN'S COMMANDO, AT CHRISTIANA.



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This, like firing on ambulances, is directly against the Geneva Convention, which stipulates that bombardment should as far as possible be confined to fortifications and not include private buildings. But the Boer cares for none of these things; he is little better than an ignorant savage, and knows and cares nothing for conventions.

On the whole, this was a good day's work, though we lost rather heavily. It showed, however, that the Boers were not always invincible, even behind their earthworks.

The next day a doctor came in from the Boers for chloroform and brandy. He was a Scotchman, and said he had been compelled to go with the Boers, which is hardly believable, as he could have stayed in Kimberley if he had wanted to when he was here. One of our men knew of him and said he was the biggest scoundrel in the medical profession, but he got his chloroform and brandy.

On the twenty-eighth we had another fight. When I came in to lunch I found a note from the captain of the ambulance corps asking me to be ready to go out with the ambulance at 3.30 P.M., as our men were going out in force. I wrote a note to say he might count upon me, but ran across the man who he said had told him to write to me. In the course of conver-

sation I said that I should be there on time, and he asked me what I meant. When I explained he was surprised, and said I must stay at the hospital and not go out, as he had got a reprimand for sending Dr. Watkins and myself away from our post a few days before. I was a bit disappointed, but of course had to obey orders, and as it turned out I did not miss much. All the afternoon there was lots of firing, both rifle and artillery, but no wounded turned up. About 7.30 we got news that the wounded were coming in, so I went down to the hospital.

Dr. Mackenzie had been somewhere watching the fight, and came in with glowing accounts of the way in which our men had attacked the Boers, stormed their fort, taken their big gun, and done great things. This was good news, but when the wounded began to come in we heard another tale. The first few said we had lost heavily, but knew no details. Others arrived who told us that Colonel Scott Turner, who commanded all the mounted men, was killed (with many of his officers), and that we had not taken the gun or fort or accomplished what we had planned.

The wounded kept straggling in by ones and twos, and now and then an ambulance brought more, and so it went on until about 2.30 A.M., when the last one was finished. Altogether

about thirty wounded were treated, but I got only six of them, for after attending to a few Watkins got a man who was shot through the bowels and asked me to help him. It was a worse wound even than I had had with my own similar case a few days previous, and took nearly two hours to attend to. The poor chap only lived about twelve hours.

We got home to bed about three, and were glad to get a little rest. Next day was a very sad day, for by this time we knew that we had lost a lot of men, exactly how many we did not know till the Boers sent in to say they had nineteen of our dead and we could fetch them, and so we did. The total loss was twenty-two killed at the time, and two died after in hospital. The nineteen were so badly cut up that there was some ground for the rumours that after our men had retired the Boers had gone round and finished off any wounded who were still alive. They had been very near the Boer fort, and this fact might account for the severity of their wounds, but nobody knows except the Boers. The colonel was shot dead quite close to the fort leading on his men. He was a very brave man but rash, and though the townspeople were a good deal upset at his death, there was a curious undercurrent in his own men’s sorrow. They all felt that he was reck-

less, and likely at any time to endanger all their lives for the slightest reason, or rather for no reason at all. Of course they all knew that any of their sorties were very risky, but Turner always seemed to go in for unnecessary risks, and the men naturally did not like it.

All the dead were buried on the Wednesday afternoon (November 29th), and the whole town was gloomy. It is said that Scott Turner's orders were to attack the Boer position and do what he could, but not to press the attack on the fort itself, as that would be too costly. Turner, however, could not restrain himself, and went for the fort in spite of orders.

In one of the Boer positions which our men took they captured one hundred and fifty shells of a very deadly kind, seven barrels of gunpowder, and a few other things, but the price we paid for them was far too heavy. On that same Wednesday night we got signals from the relief column that they were coming along. From this time things were pretty quiet, and there was no further firing into the town. Most of the Boers were supposed to have gone down to meet the column, but they left enough to prevent our men doing much, but no actual fighting took place until December 9th, when our men went out to the Homestead and had an artillery fight with the Boers at Kamfersdam.

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There was a great deal of firing, but not much damage was done. One of our men only was killed and two wounded, all these by the bullets from shrapnel shell, which are just like those I used to make with a mould at home.

## CHAPTER V

### MILITARY ECCENTRICITIES

ABOUT this time the military began to worry us with proclamations. First we all had to report how many horses we had, and a few days later there was a notice that horse owners might use the horse feed they had, but when that was done none would be issued except for horses used for military operations. Fortunately my stableman had a fair supply. Then there was trouble about condensed milk; none was allowed to be sold except on a doctor's order, and then only for infants and sick people, and one wrote more orders for milk than prescriptions about this time.

We had been for some time on an allowance of meat. At first it was not very strictly adhered to, but now it began to be doled out in the regulation quantity. We were very lucky, for our butcher used to send us ours the same as usual, but he was the only butcher allowed to have

meat by the military, and most people had to wait their turn. As nearly all of the men in town were in the town guard, the women often had to try to get the meat allowance for themselves, and were often shoved out of the way and did not get any. There was a great deal of grumbling about the meat supply, and as there was plenty of cattle it seemed as if a better allowance could be made and a better system of distributing arranged. I suppose, of course, the military officers did their best to arrange all these things, but as there were not many of them they had their hands very full.

As time went on, however, dissatisfaction rose in the town as to the way the officers continued issuing orders that were all very well from their point of view, but not at all calculated to promote the welfare of the townspeople. A military officer is so concerned with his own importance that he never considers any view of a matter other than his own. Personally our officers were very genial people, but as a body they appeared to believe that Kimberley was made for the especial benefit of their regiment.

After this, except for rumours about the approaching column, nothing happened until the 9th of December. On that day our artillery went out to the Homestead and tried to shell



the Boers out of a strong position they had taken up in one of the outsidest mines—Kamfersdam—but though the two parties blazed away at each other for a long time, not a great deal of damage was done, only one of our men being killed and three slightly wounded. The Boer loss was two killed and a few wounded, and we did not drive them from their position.

On Sunday, the tenth, a little distant firing was heard late in the afternoon, and it was reported that a few shells had been seen bursting on the Spytfontein hills, where the Boers were massed in strong force, having evidently been fired by the relief column. On the next morning heavy cannon firing began before five and kept on till after nine. It was tremendous, just like volley firing with cannon. A dozen reports would come in quick succession, the whole of them perhaps in less than a minute, and for about four hours this sort of thing was almost incessant. Some of the shells could be seen bursting in the same kopjes as on the previous night, but whether the bulk of the noise was from our guns or the Boers' we did not know. Of course, after all this we were confident that our column would come in in the afternoon, but of course it did not. And though I am now writing on December 16th, and all this took place five days ago within twenty

miles of here, the outside world knows far more of what happened than I do. As our column has not arrived we imagine that the Dutch position was too strong for our men to force.

We are all mighty sick at the lack of news. Whether the officers have any or not we do not know, but at all events the civilians know nothing. It was not until sixteen days after the fight at Modder River that we were allowed to read extracts from the despatches. We don't want to know the plans of the general, but we can't help wanting to know something of the things that have happened. I suppose the army red tape forbids anything being told to civilians until it is too old to interest them.

The military orders on one occasion towards the end of November contained the interesting information that on *October 6th* a company of the town guard went out to the rifle butts to practice, and returned after they had finished. Another day the item was that mule No. so-and-so, belonging to the Royal Artillery, had died and was accordingly struck off the strength of the regiment from the date of its death. Then again a few nights ago when the search-lights were signalling, an important message was sent through, and all concerned strained their eyes to get hold of it rightly. When got it read, "What is the number branded on the

hoof of the horse issued to O'——?" O'—— is the military doctor, and he has not heard the last of that horse yet.

After the heavy cannonading on the eleventh everything was deadly dull for a time. A few distant guns were heard on the twelfth, and now and then the Boers dropped a few shells into Wesselton, but beyond this there was no news and nothing doing outside. Inside there was great excitement, for somehow a rumour got around that a proclamation would be issued to the effect that all women and children, and all men not actually bearing arms or in some other way indispensable to the defence of the town, would be compelled to leave Kimberley as soon as the railway was opened. A notice was printed that free passes on the railway would be given to people not able to pay the fare to wherever they wished to go, and this gave some colour to the story. Anyhow, though there was no official notification that any such scheme was contemplated, it was known that such a plan had been debated by the town council and the military, and later on that the colonel had received positive orders from headquarters to carry it out. The reason was that as the railway from here to Orange River (eighty miles) ran through what was practically enemy's country, it would

need to be guarded all the time, or the Boers would rip it up again. To efficiently guard that length of line would need an enormous number of men, for unless almost every yard was looked after carefully a single Boer could creep in and take out a rail or two and so disorganise the line again. As any great number of men could not be spared for long, the authorities saw that there was a choice of two things, either to bring up food to Kimberley, or take Kimberley to the food and then let the line look after itself. Naturally, being officials, the wrong thing seemed right to them, and they seem to have decided to take Kimberley to the food. This was very well in theory, but when you consider that all the colonial towns, Cape Town as well as others, were already overcrowded with refugees from up country, the hotels and boarding-houses being crowded, it seemed to our people that in leaving Kimberley they would be going from the frying pan into the fire. Then again, many people who were struggling along here, only just able to make both ends meet, would be hopelessly ruined by leaving.

The railway notice said that no excess luggage would be taken, and this meant practically that the people would have to go with what they stood in. It was a foolish notion, and the very mention of compulsion irritated the

people. Had there been any attempt to carry out the compulsory exodus, I firmly believe there would have been civil war in the town, and that would either have resulted in surrendering the town to the Boers or in telling the military to get out and leave us to look after ourselves. One man told the colonel in almost so many words that if our own countrymen were going to turn us out of the homes we had earned and worked for, surrender to the Dutch could not possibly bring anything worse upon us. Anyhow, feeling ran very high, and the whole town was aroused. To do our colonel justice, I believe he saw the absurdity of the proposal, but he had his orders and could not go against them, though he did not actually hurry to carry them out. Had he been able to publish a proclamation when the scare began, to the effect that hard times were coming and that it was advisable for all people who were able to do so to leave the town, and that every possible assistance and facility would be given to them to do so, but that no compulsion would be used, none of this feeling would have arisen. I suppose that this would have been flying too directly in the face of the orders of his superiors, and so could not be done. Anyhow, a very strong protest was sent off by Rhodes and other important people, showing the folly of compel-

ling the people to leave, and for the present the matter stands over till our relief column arrives.

It is pretty generally thought that the despatch which Rhodes and some other prominent men sent off some weeks ago urging that immediate relief must be sent to us caused the issue of the compulsory departure order, the authorities at the Cape or at home thinking the matter to be more pressing than it really was.

At present, however much any one wants to get away there are no means, so it can't be done. All the week (December 11th to 17th) we have been longing to hear some news of the column's advancing, but not a syllable of news has reached us. Rumours are plenty, the favourite one being that the Boers hold a very strong position in the Spytfontein kopjes, through which the railway runs. Our men failed to shell them out, so now it is said that the next move will be to try to surround them in the kopjes and cut off their food and water supply, at the same time bringing the railway round the kopjes either on one side or the other in spite of the Boers. It sounds feasible, the country to the east of the kopjes being pretty level for a railway, but it is rather a big order, and would apparently take a long time.

To-day (December 18th) we had news in the paper of the big fight on the eleventh at Spyt-

fontein, and our guesses were not far out. There was a heavy engagement there and we lost heavily, as any attacking force must always do when advancing in the open against a strongly entrenched enemy. The column did not succeed in turning out the Boers, but inflicted a heavy loss upon them, possibly heavier than our own, but of that we cannot be sure. However, an irregular force feels the loss of its men far more than a regular one. We hope, therefore, that the Boer loss has been great enough to discourage them a little, but this we shall find out later.

Whenever we have had a little opportunity to think of others than ourselves we have wondered how Mafeking was getting on. We have had news at long intervals, but generally much to the same effect—viz., that heavy bombardment is still going on. It is wonderful how that little place has held out, and we would give anything to help them to continue their resistance until they are relieved. If they are able to do so, I think their defence will be one of the pluckiest in history. They have been shelled almost the whole of the siege, and our shelling has been the merest child's play to theirs. The Boers have never used anything heavier than a twelve pounder against us so far, and at Mafeking they have used forty, sixty, and even a

hundred pounder, and yet those chaps have hung on, and keep getting a few Boers here and there when they have a chance. Fortunately, they were well supplied with food at the beginning, and got most of their women and children out.

December 24th.—All the last week things have been quiet. Our men have been out a few times and a little shooting has been done on both sides, but we have had no one hit. The Boers are leaving us alone, and both sides are awaiting developments. Our men cannot attack the Boers, as their position in the kopjes at Spytfontein is too strong. The Boers cannot leave Spytfontein without permitting the relief column to get into Kimberley, so apparently we are just sitting looking at each other. In the meantime the Boers are leaving Kimberley unmolested, and are even dismantling the forts from which they shelled us earlier in the war, probably taking the sandbags to fortify other positions from which to harass the column. Our men are doing all they can to make these old positions untenable by filling up the wells and cutting the dams, so that if they do reoccupy them their water supply will be a problem to them. We hear now that the Spytfontein commandos are in difficulties for water, which is very likely. We hear, too, that typhoid



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and dysentery are decimating their numbers, which is also likely, for the average Boer has no idea of military sanitation. We ourselves, in spite of all precautions, are getting our share of these troubles, so that the Dutch must be having a great deal of difficulty with them.

On the twenty-first we had another sad mishap. A corporal of the mounted police, after going round and inspecting his outlying pickets, went off towards the Boer lines without saying anything to his men. They did not see him go, and consequently when they made out a man some four or five hundred yards spying about and scouting they fired at and killed him. It was just getting dark, and as he had not warned his men no one could be blamed. It was absolutely his own fault, but it is very sad to kill one's own men all the same. There is no doubt now that a man who was unaccountably shot earlier in the siege when out scouting met his death by his own men.

We have not had any cheerful news about our forces in the Colony and in Natal this week; in fact, they all seem to be in trouble. To the non-military man who knows something of the country all three columns seem to be running their heads against stone walls when they try to turn the Boers out of the hills in Natal, at Stormberg, and at Nauwpoort. Many of these

hills are almost unscalable, and to try and take these in face of a strong force armed with magazine long-range rifles seems the height of folly. The plan that commends itself to the common sense civilian mind is to keep a sufficient force at these hilly places to prevent the Dutch advancing into the Colony and then to send a column into the Free State through the flat country anywhere between here and Orange River. However, I hope those in charge of the movement really do know what they are about. At present it seems as if when they had spelt South Africa they had come to the end of their knowledge.

We have now been cut off for ten weeks, and seem just as near relief as we were at the beginning. Personally, I have not felt the nip much, because I have a good balance at the bank and all our tradespeople know that we are good payers, so we can buy when other citizens cannot. Soon after the siege began we started quietly getting in stores, and we are pretty well supplied, so that I think we could last out a month quite comfortably; even six weeks, by economy, although we could not buy a thing in town. I fear the bulk of the people have not been so prudent. Many of them got quantities of provisions, but began to consume them directly the siege began, which is

the worst sort of foolishness. So far we have not touched any of our reserve, and even keep adding to it little by little as we can. There is some talk to the effect that we may be required to hold out till the end of January, and for all that I can see this is true.

It is beginning to be very hard now for infants and invalids, as there is very little food to be got of the sort they ought to have. Most of the milk farms just outside the town have been looted and the cattle driven off by the Boers, so that there is hardly any fresh milk to be had, and no great stock of the condensed article on hand. The military are husbanding the latter as carefully as they can, but I don't see how it can last very long. No one can buy a can of milk without a doctor's order, which has to be countersigned by the military officer in charge of all stores. Most of the doctors are careful to give orders only in emergency cases, but there is one who gives more orders than all the rest of us put together. I expect he makes the people pay for his orders, and gives them indiscriminately.

All this time work has been pretty brisk. Dr. Fuller got cut off, as I have previously explained, so I have a few of his best patients, and besides this there is a lot of sickness about. The men keep moderately well because most

of them are in the town guard and are out in the forts, where they get more fresh air and less whisky than usual. But a good many contract fever or diarrhœa or dysentery, the last two because of the coarse food and the quantity of water they drink on the hot days. This makes a great deal of work, but it is not paying work. Early in the winter Mackenzie and I decided that we would treat all members of the defensive forces free, unless their illness was due to drink or other indiscretion. It did not seem fair to charge these men for our services when many of them were actually risking their lives in the defence of the town, and though I think we were the first to start this all the other doctors quickly fell into the same way. But there was considerable paying work, too, among the women and children, the latter especially giving us a great deal of trouble. At best young children die here with great rapidity in the hot weather, and the unsettled state of affairs of course makes things worse than usual this year. Then, too, quite half the number of patients go to the seashore for December and January, and they can't get away this year. On the whole, the amount of paying work has been a good deal larger than usual this season. But collections are hard for several reasons. First of all, Dorward, our collector, is in the town

guard, and gets very little time off, and then we have told him to send in accounts only to such people who can well afford to pay. Even if he were at liberty as much as usual we should not expect him to go around collecting as he usually does. The people have too much on their hands to be worried for doctor's money just at present. As long as we can make enough to live on we shall be satisfied for the present.

December 26th.—Christmas over once more and relief as far off as ever. Early in the siege those who wanted to be really funny talked about relief reaching us at Christmas time, and we all thought then that this was a joke, but the jocular part does not seem quite so funny now. Christmas day was very quiet, even more so than the one I spent on the North Sea. There we had sufficient excitement when we found that the leg of pork we had been saving for Christmas had gone bad, but even that was denied us here. We did not expect our ducks, for which we paid £1, to be anything very much, and in this we were not disappointed. We had Dr. Stoney and his brother to dinner, and I think they enjoyed themselves in a quiet way.

There have been rumours that a great fight was going to take place at Spytfontein, but nothing has happened. To-day there have been

rumours that Plumer has got down from Bula-wayo and relieved Mafeking, but that is too good to believe until properly confirmed. There have been reports of another sort for the last few days—viz., that the Boers have captured a train full of lyddite and other ammunition somewhere between Orange River and Spytfontein, and this is so bad that it probably is true. We have no doubt that the Boers will be defeated in the end, but at present most of the signs point the other way. We in Kimberley are hoping a good deal from Sir Charles Warren. He has been up here before, and knows both the country and the Boers, but whether he will come this way or not is very doubtful. There are many men here who served with him before, and they have great belief in him.

We had a Christmas message from Sir Alfred Milner. He did not wish us a merry Christmas but a lucky one, and we appreciated the wording of the message.

Yesterday we had a new proclamation, to the effect that no one should kill or cause to be killed any ox, cow, bull, sheep, lamb, goat, kid, or pig without permission. So things are getting rather tight. Our next door neighbour has a small red pig (looks like a Tamworth) about six weeks old that runs about his yard. It seems too funny that he should not be able

to kill this small swine without getting a permit. I suppose the idea is that people who kill at home will not be allowed meat from the butcher till they have eaten their share.

The Boers have been shelling Wesselton mine again to-day, but I don't think they have done any damage. It must be a bitter disappointment to them to find that we have managed a decent water supply after they cut us off from the river. Of course they know about our getting water from Wesselton, and I suppose they keep hammering away there in the hope that they may burst the pumps, but as the machinery is all in the mine I don't think they have a very good chance of doing so. However, the more they shoot the better, for modern guns don't stand an unlimited amount of firing, as the rifling wears away, particularly in the heavier ones.

December 31st.—Very little in the way of war has happened since I wrote last. On several occasions we have heard distant firing, so our relief column is either shelling the Boers or being shelled, which we don't know. To-day there is a rumour that our men have taken Scholtz Nek, which is an important point held by the Boers, not far from Spytfontein, but we have not had this confirmed yet. The paper has been for the last few days full of stories to

the effect that the War Office and England is waking up to the fact that the war is a far more serious business than they imagined. This is very reassuring, but one can't help feeling indignant at the way we are kept cooped up here, no fresh steps being taken to help us out as far as we know. We had hoped that Warren would come up this way, but to-day I hear he has gone to Natal.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE FOOD PROBLEM

OF course we all know that Kimberley is merely a pawn in the game, and that it does not much matter to England what becomes of us. But it matters a good deal to us. We are now about to feel the real nip of the siege. Last week we had a proclamation that various necessities, such as flour, meal, bread, rice, sugar, etc., would in future only be issued in stated quantities, and that only to the holders of permits. To get a permit for any one of these things we must make a declaration as to the quantities of all of these articles which we have in our possession, and not only that, but also declare the quantities of every kind of provision which you had. So in order to get a little sugar we have to give the military a list of everything we have. I have no doubt they keep a record of those things and will requisition them later on.

This seems all right in theory, but having

myself been one of the provident ones I don't at all appreciate the idea of being looted for the benefit of the improvident.

The only article we wanted was bread. We had a good store of flour, but did not care to bake for ourselves if we could help it. I went to Major Gorle, the head of the food-supply arrangements, and proposed a compromise to him. My bread allowance came to about twenty pounds a week, so I offered to give his baker twenty-five pounds of flour a week in exchange for that amount of bread, the extra flour to pay for labour and fuel. I thought it seemed a fair offer, but I suppose he thought it would be a bad precedent, for he declined to accept it. He offered, however, to supply me with bread as long as the siege lasted if I handed over all my flour to him in a lump. This I declined to do, for he cannot know how long the siege will last, and though my flour would be a drop in the ocean for the whole of Kimberley, it will last *me* quite three months. So as soon as our baker gives up supplying us with bread we shall start baking our own.

As for meat just now we are at a loss where to turn for fresh supplies, for the butcher has given notice that he will not be allowed to sell to us after to-day, as the military are going to take over the meat supply to-morrow, but so

far these latter have not made their method of procedure public. Vegetables are also very scarce. The authorities have taken over the regulation of them, and as usual have made a bad muddle of it. Yesterday they advertised to supply vegetables at a certain place from 6 A.M. to 10.30 A.M. Agnes suggested that she should go and get some, but I, knowing something of the crush there would be, prevented her. I went myself at a little after six o'clock, and found the street full, so I came home and did some gardening, and I afterwards heard that nothing was sold till nearly eleven o'clock. After this I don't look forward with any keen enjoyment to the military administration of the meat supply. We can get a little green stuff out of our own garden, enough to keep us from getting scurvy, but not much more. When the water was cut off by the Boers we were not allowed to water our gardens (though many people have done so), and as we imagined the siege would not last longer than a month we did not worry about the vegetables, but tried to keep our fruit trees and vines alive.

Now, however, when it begins to look as though we were to be shut up for all time I am going to cultivate my vegetable garden again. I have succeeded in getting one of the borough water carts to bring me two loads of

water a week. The water supply comes from the De Beers Company. The managers have to pump a lot of water out of the mine, and have laid on a big pipe to the nearest street and practically any one can get water who wants it. The cart holds about four hundred gallons, and I have some tanks and barrels to store it in during the days between the loads, so I shall get on all right. Of course the water is very hard, but it is better than none.

I have put in potatoes, lettuce, dwarf beans, peas, mustard and cress, and Indian corn this week, and have just got some tomatoes up in the greenhouse to be transplanted presently. Beet is the best thing of all to grow here. It grows well, and you can take the outside leaves off time after time just as we used to do with the wurzels at Garton for the cows. When the leaves are boiled you can't tell them from spinach.

At last the Dutchman has been decently sentenced for communicating with the Boers. He lived far out at Wesselton, and on two occasions was seen after dark to leave his house, the last one in the village, and go in the direction of the Boer rifle pits, not returning for several hours. He could have no possible business in that quarter at that time, so he must have been communicating with the enemy. The

judge wanted to give him a year, but the other members of the court declared that they would sit forever unless the sentence was three years to hard labour, so eventually the judge gave way and the man was sentenced.

The Dutch lawyer, of whom I have written before as having bolted from here the day before we were cut off, was captured by Methuen's people some weeks ago, and is now in jail at Cape Town. Rumour says that when caught he was in an office telegraphing some information to the Boers, but the truth is not known. Now he keeps writing to his relatives asserting his innocence, and they publish his letters. He says he was arrested by the Boers as he was suspected by them, and that being a leading Bondsman he was suspected by the English. When he is tried I have very little doubt his Boer friends will swear that he was arrested by them, but Kimberley will never believe that, whatever the court does.

I hear to-day that the Pretoria Boers are very confident as to what the end of the war will be. They say that when England sues for peace their terms will be Natal, Bechuanaland, and Griqualand West to be given up to them, and any other parts of the Colony in which the majority of the inhabitants wish to be under the Dutch flag. They will also demand the payment of twenty millions.

We hear that Roberts and Kitchener are coming, or, rather, are already on the way, and large numbers of troops of all sorts, but it is an anxious time. Try as I will, I don't find I can take my usual amount of interest in the work, and as to settling down to read professional literature, that is quite out of the question.

January 5th.—Very little has happened since the last entry. On several days the Boers have fired a few guns at our patrols or the cattle guard, and one shell came into the town and went through an inhabited house two days ago with the usual result—no one hurt. We hear that the Australian contingent drove the Boers out of Douglas on January 1st, and to-day there are rumours that they have done the same at Barkley West, but I hardly think this will be confirmed. But if nothing military has been happening, we have had plenty of other distractions. On the first of January the new proclamation about meat came out. The butchers had to cease selling at their shops, and the whole arrangement was taken over by the military. The new allowance was a quarter of a pound for adults and two ounces for children under twelve.

The meat was to be distributed in the new Market Hall, and the three wards that formed half the town were to go there to be served at one side, and the three of the other half on the

other. This was for white people only; coloured folks and natives had a separate place each in a different part of the town. Railings were put up at the sides of the Market Hall with three gates, and each ward formed up in front of its own gate in a two-and-two string, four people entering at a time. The day before the new arrangement began every householder had to send in a notice stating the number of adults and children that there were in his family and the quantity of meat he wished to draw, so that when he applied for his supply his demand could be checked from the list made out from all the requisitions. He was then given a numbered card, with the quantity he was entitled to stamped upon it and properly signed so that in future he would just have to show this card and there would be no further bother. The distribution began at 6 A.M. on the third. Agnes wanted to go and fetch our supply, but I did not care for her to do so; but I had been out in the night and was tired, so we neither of us went that day, as we had enough meat on hand. Being the first day, all the arrangements were strange and the tickets had to be made out, so that it took a long while. But it was better than the previous indiscriminate fighting. Next day I went about 6 A.M. and found I was pretty late, crowds being there



DISTRIBUTION OF THE MEAT SUPPLY.



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before me. I came near the tail of the string. My ward, No. 2, and another, No. 6, are each of them quite three times the size of any of the others, so these wards were not half done when the others were all served, and we were consequently at a disadvantage. I took over an hour to draw my pound of meat that day. All dealings are for cash, 9d. a pound being the fixed price.

The officer in charge of all food matters, Major Gorle, is an intelligent man, and saw at once that it would not do to put the two big wards in a worse position than the small ones, so for the third morning he arranged that the two big wards should draw two days' supply one day, and on the next day the four small ones should do the same. This course hurried things up a good deal, for half of the people had to be served every day instead of the whole of them. That day I left the house about 5.30, and was back very soon after six. Vegetables are to be given out in a similar way twice a week, but I have not been on a "vegetable day" yet.

The present arrangement is very good, the elimination of natives and coloured people and the presence of a few police and soldiers makes everything quite orderly, and, but for the tediousness of waiting your turn, fairly comfort-

able. Inside the hall the meat is laid out on the tables ready cut up and carefully weighed into one-, two-, three-, and four-pound lots. When you show your ticket the man sees in a minute how much you are entitled to and hands it over. There is nothing that a lady need object to in the whole business now, so I shall let Agnes go if I happen to be out on the days we want our supply.

We are allowed to send another white person, servant, or otherwise to fetch our rations, but he or she will have to take his turn just like the others. We are also allowed to send a coloured or native servant, but these have to wait till the whites present are all served, so that expedient is not good enough or we should send John. Our white servant is too stupid to trust, so one of us has to go.

It is very funny to see all the town's best people either fetching their meat themselves or sending a member of their families for it. Parsons, lawyers, doctors, business men, we are all there, and it is a huge joke that we are all in the same boat, though it is to be hoped the joke won't last too long. Previous to this we have all thought that as long as there was a decent balance at the bank nothing could go far wrong, but now we find that the balance is of very little use. We can only buy necessities, and

these only in strictly defined quantities, not too liberal. As for luxuries they are either not to be had at all, or else only on production of a medical certificate. Unless, therefore, you have a private stock of luxuries, or other things intermediate between necessities and luxuries, you have to live very sparsely and monotonously. The system of permits is a great nuisance to the doctors. Every patient, whether rich or not, considers that his circumstances are such that he is entitled to have a permit from you to buy milk, butter, stout, cheese, oatmeal, mutton, extract of beef, etc. We are between the devil and the deep sea. On the one side the patients clamouring and getting offended if they don't get permits for everything they fancy, and on the other Major Gorle making trouble if we send in too many. Most of us only give them in cases where we feel sure that the applicant is actually suffering in health for want of the food demanded. But some of the doctors are either very soft-hearted or easily imposed upon, or more likely think to curry favour by giving permits indiscriminately. Milk (condensed) is the chief thing wanted, and the stock is none too great, so we have to be careful.

The Boers have raided most of our milk cows, so fresh milk is very scarce, but there is some, and we are among the lucky ones who

still get ours. You would think that the military would have asked the doctors to hold a meeting and decide what to do about permits for milk and other things, giving us a rough idea of the amounts in stock and the daily amount it was safe to issue, but such is not the case. So far the authorities have given us no instructions whatever, and within the last three days they have told me that the total available amount per day is twenty tins, Watkins that it is forty, and Mackenzie that it is twenty-five. You can't work with figures like that. The colonel is half inclined to *commandeer* all the fresh milk and issue it only to infants and invalids. This would be rather a good plan, as it would save a lot of the condensed milk and we should then have a reserve in case the milk cows had to be killed for food. We should miss our fresh milk, but would gladly give it up if we were sure that it went to the right people when we had done so. At present if we did it would probably go to some one who needs it no more than we do. Many of the people are very good about the milk. The De Beers Company supplies the hospital with a great deal, and just now they are sending a good deal to Agnes for free distribution among the sick and poor. She is a leader in the Benevolent Society, and so knows who is deserving. One patient of mine

has a cow of his own, and after keeping a moderate supply for his own children he allows me to use the rest for any one who needs it, free.

Every one, however, is not so good. Some genius who did not care for black tea or coffee struck the happy idea of getting in some of the tinned infants' food, which contains milk, and using that as milk. This, however, did not last long, as I expect the fact of young single men buying babies' food led to enquiries. Anyhow, one of the parsons told me of it, and I went straight off to Gorle to suggest the commandeering of all infants' food and found that he had already done so, so he is pretty wide awake. To-day (January 7th) I got my supply of vegetables when I got my supply of meat, so considered myself lucky. The quantity was for half a week for four people, and consisted of a bunch of five carrots, none of them big, four small parsnips, and nine beet-roots, none of them as big as a big radish. Price, 1s. But one gets a few little presents or is able to buy small quantities of vegetables and fruit from people who have wells in their gardens and so are independent of the water supply. To-day Mackenzie bought a lot of beautiful peaches for himself and me at 1½s. each. Agnes says I am to say that eggs are 6s. 6d. a dozen. Butter is a thing of the past, except in tins, and that is ob-

tainable only by means of a doctor's certificate. We had several lots of fresh butter from a patient long after it was impossible to purchase it. She had a child down with scarlet fever, and consequently was afraid to send the butter to her brothers' and sisters' families for fear of infecting them, but for all that I offered to buy her surplus. She refused, but gave me about a pound several times. Of course I paid her back with honey or sweets or something of that sort for her children.

On January 1st we were delighted to find a notice in the paper that the water would be turned on for watering gardens on and after Tuesday, January 2d. I found the tap would run on the first, so I stole a day and gave all my garden a fine soaking. Having been so virtuous all those weeks and not used a drop of tap water unnecessarily I felt easy in my mind. Now we thought we should be able to grow all sorts of vegetables, and so planted a quantity of seeds. I also put in a patch of barley to cut green for my horses. It was only a little patch, but still it will be a help. I put in some mealies, too (better known outside the Transvaal as Indian corn). When they grow up the green stems and leaves are good fodder for horses. I already had in a few plants of sweet mealies, such as the Americans call sweet

corn or pop corn, and I added to the number. I got the seed from Gardener Williams, who, you will remember, is the general manager of the De Beers. He is an American, and a first class one, too. But, alas, on Friday a new notice appeared that no gardens were to be watered, under the same pains and penalties as before. This was bad, but as the taps seemed inclined to run still I watered on the sly Friday, Saturday, and to-day, Sunday (January 8th). But I have talked the thing over with one of the water-works men and the military officer who is responsible for the water supply, and they give very good reasons why the gardens cannot be watered, so I shall relapse into virtue again, and use tap water only for necessary domestic purposes. I mean, however, to give up the little bath we have been using and use my big bath, with a fair amount of water.

The reasons why we can't water our gardens are these: All our water supply now is pumped from Wesselton Mine, and the daily supply is 250,000 gallons, whereas the daily consumption, without watering any gardens, is 300,000 gallons. When the water-pipes from the river were cut off by the Boers our reservoir was full, but the difference between supply and consumption lowers it about half an inch a day, so if the siege lasts long enough the reservoir



will in time become empty. Another reason is that the Dutch are always shelling Wesselton, so one day they may happen to drop a shell into the pump and then good-bye to our water. The pipes from Wesselton run a long way outside our line of defences, and the Boers could cut them easily enough if they knew just where they ran and had the pluck to come and do it. If either of these things happened, the water in the reservoir would be the last we should get, so it is wise to keep it as full as we can without actually stinting ourselves for necessary water. When the water was on we thought we were going to do great things in the gardening line and grow almost enough vegetables to keep us going. We put a lot of seeds in, but whether we shall manage to keep them going is another matter. Green stuff for horses being very scarce, I put in a little patch of barley and a lot of mealies in the trench down which the water runs. The mealies when cut green make good food for horses.

## CHAPTER VII

### HORSE FOR DINNER

FORAGE is a big difficulty just now. The military give us doctors a forage allowance, dry mealies principally, but nearly all the cabs have stopped for want of forage, and the trams are going to be stopped next week I hear. There are no horses for the milk or bread carts. Everybody has to fetch his own. Presently there will be no carts in the place except for the military, the doctors, and the undertakers.

January 10th.—At last we have begun to feel the siege a little more acutely. On Monday the people who went for meat were told that they could only take half their allowance in beef, the other half must be taken in horse-flesh or else gone without. Lots of people went without. We are not compelled to kill horses just yet, but as forage has become so scarce plenty of horses which are now in fair condition must be turned out on the veldt, and there they will soon become very poor. The authorities there-

## THE END

I was very much surprised when they had been  
 a while before the entrance and we started  
 in the hall in consequence the door was quite  
 open and we went in. I must be  
 very careful as to the next step in doing  
 so. We went in and found a very good night  
 and all were happy and at my next day.  
 It was very much a surprise and then my share  
 of the work was to be done. By the way, I had  
 managed to get the first time in that day to get  
 a very good result which allowed me to get in the  
 end of the day for my allowance it was with-  
 out waiting. I had not before tried to do so,  
 as I did not want to take an unfair advantage.  
 But I found that a few people were getting  
 some boxes and certainly had not such good  
 reasons for wanting them as I had, so I went  
 in and got one, etc. I brought my allowance  
 in time, and that night we had it for  
 dinner. If I had not known what it was I am  
 sure I could not have told it from beef. It  
 was tender and good enough for anything, but  
 all the same it took some good will to eat it,  
 and I did not take a second helping. I guess  
 I am not hungry enough yet.

January 14th.—There is a very good story going around about the horse-flesh, and though I don't know whether it is true or not it ought to be. Colonel Peckman, who is in command

Meat Supply  
The full meat ration  
of 1/2 lb for two days can  
be supplied to-day  
All HORSE MEAT  
Ration Ticket  
holders may take back  
their ration on 20th  
A B. NO RATION will be sold  
at the distribution for cash

HORSE-MEAT NOTICE.

fore very wisely decided that they had better be eaten before this happened, and so started to kill them off. Somehow one does not quite relish the idea of eating horse, but it must be simply because one has not been used to doing so; the horse is a clean enough feeder, and ought to be all right. Monday was not my meat day, but I went along on Tuesday and took my share of horse-flesh like the rest. By the way, I had managed for the first time on that day to get a meat ticket which allowed me to go in the exit door and get my allowance at once without waiting. I had not before tried to do so, as I did not want to take an unfair advantage. But I found that a few people were getting these tickets who certainly had not such good reasons for wanting them as I had, so I went in and got one, too. I brought my allowance of horse home, and that night we had it for dinner. If I had not known what it was I am sure I could not have told it from beef. It was tender and good enough for anything, but all the same it took some good will to eat it, and I did not take a second helping. I guess I am not hungry enough yet.

January 14th.—There is a very good story going around about the horse-flesh, and though I don't know whether it is true or not it ought to be. Colonel Peakman, who is in command

Meat Supply  
The full meat ration  
of 12 lbs for two days can  
be supplied to-day  
All HORSE MEAT  
Ridge Tour. Ticket  
holders may take half  
their ration on Tour.  
N.B. NO TOUR will be sold  
at the distribution for cash

HORSE-MEAT NOTICE.

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of all the mounted men, Cape Police, Diamond Fields Horse, and Kimberley Light Horse, is here. The first day horse-flesh was served out some of it was cooked for the officers' mess at the mounted camp. At the table Peakman said, "Gentlemen, I am sorry to say that we were unable to get all our ration in beef to-day, and had to take part of it in horse-flesh. This which I am carving is beef, the horse is at the other end, and any one who prefers it can help himself." Nobody did prefer it, and so they all ate beef and made a good dinner. When they had finished Peakman suddenly said, "By Jove, gentlemen, I find I have made a mistake in the joints; this is the horse-flesh and the other is the beef." It was just a dodge of his to get them started on the horse-flesh. Since writing about our own experience of horse-flesh we have had two more allowances, both times steak, and this is as good as any one can want. It does not taste quite like beef, but is very good. Even Agnes enjoyed it to-day.

All the week there has been a little shelling at intervals through the day, but nothing much. News of the column is scarce. In fact, we have given up thinking about it.

The talk all day is of food and of the permits necessary to get it with. The milk business has changed hands now. I think I men-



tioned that the colonel was talking of commandeering all the fresh milk for infants and invalids, but he decided not to. Instead, he has handed over the administration of the milk to a civil committee, consisting of Mr. Judge, the Mayor (Mr. Oliver), Dr. Stoney, Dr. Mackenzie, Dr. Watkins, and myself. How I came to be one of this committee I don't know. A central depot has been taken for the issue of the milk, and we have been trying to get people, both dealers and private parties, to send their milk to this depot. This has been done by publishing an appeal to all those who are strong and well to give up using milk, so that infants and sick folk may get it. We have given up ours now, and many people have done the same. The milk is served out at the depot, but only to those who have a medical certificate that they require it. The military hand over one case (forty-eight tins) of condensed milk a day to us, and tell us that we need not ask for any more, as we shall not get it. This can of milk is issued in the same way—on presentation of medical certificates only. After the first day's work we found that the demand so far exceeded the supply that to give everybody a chance we should have to make the amount issued to each very small, so we cut down the fresh milk to half a bottle a day and the condensed milk to one

tin a week for each person, irrespective of age or illness. This worked well as far as the fresh milk was concerned, but as one hundred and forty-four applied for tins our forty-eight did not nearly meet the requirement. Tinned milk is more popular than fresh for several reasons. Many babies can't take fresh milk at all, and a tin is supposed to go farther than seven half bottles, and saves sugar besides. Furthermore, a tin has only to be fetched once a week, while the fresh milk must be applied for every day. Of course the amounts are quite insufficient, but we hope to get on better and be able to give larger amounts of fresh milk in a few days' time. The tinned milk problem is hopeless, unless we succeed in persuading people who are now getting tins to take fresh milk, and for the reasons above given I don't think there is much hope of that. Of course the dealers who send in their milk are paid for it, and the people who get orders for it have to pay at a little under the price given to the dealers, but as the De Beers Company sends a big lot of milk free there is a profit on the whole thing, enough for working expenses and also to allow a certain amount to be given away to poor people who need it.

This is the first time we have been allowed to do anything at all by the authorities. One

day this week I had to write to the colonel about some red tape difficulties which the army doctor had put in the way of people getting their food, and I suggested to him very circumspectly that in matters which affected the health and feeding of the people we all thought that we doctors who knew the town, the climate, and the people might be advantageously consulted. He was very obliging, and saw at once that my objection to the red tape difficulty was sound, so he altered the routine, but he flatly declined to ask any opinion from the general body of the doctors, as they might have ideas which would "affect the military situation." This is the stock answer to everything.

Later on the colonel met me and did consult with me over the scurvy among the natives. Usually the natives in the compounds get fruit and vegetables enough to prevent their getting scurvy, but since we have had to depend on ourselves for these the supply has fallen very far short of the demand, and of course the native supply has gone to a large extent to the Europeans. As a consequence, many natives have developed scurvy. Nine hundred is the number now on hand. Gardener Williams had consulted me on the same point earlier in the day. The problem was what we could give the natives, as there was practically no lime juice and no vegetables at all, and they must have

vegetable stuff of some kind or they would all die. I worried over the thing all day, trying to think of something that grew in sufficient quantity, and yet was not used by Europeans, and at last I think I struck it. This was aloes. There are quantities of them all over the town. Now I remembered that in Mexico the natives made a drink of the juice of aloes by letting it ferment, so I did not see why the fresh juice should not be used as a vegetable drink for these scurvy boys. And by-and-by I struck a better idea still, and that was to give them the fresh green shoots from the vines. There are many useless shoots on a vine which are cut off to prevent it running too much to wood. When young they are soft and succulent like the young shoots of a rose tree, but are refreshingly acid like sorrel, and I think they should do splendidly. The Company has thousands of vines at Kenilworth, and so they have the medicine (if it turns out to be so) ready to their hands. I told Williams and the colonel these ideas, and they started right away on the vine shoots. The natives like them immensely, and eat them readily. I hope it will be a success, as I shall get some *kudos* if it is, and the natives will get better. The aloe juice will perhaps be tried later if the supply of the other stuff should give out.

The native question has been and is still a

## 100 BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

very serious one. At the beginning of the siege we had a good many thousand natives in the compounds, quite fifteen thousand I should think. Of course these needed an enormous amount of food, and when the siege began to be prolonged various efforts were made to get rid of them. One big body was sent out early in November, and was promptly sent back by the Boers, but latterly they have been sent out in smaller numbers, and either the Boers are afraid to molest them or they manage to dodge the pickets.

Report says that the Boers are taking them over and either using them to make their entrenchments or to work the mines in Johannesburg. It is rather a wrong solution of the difficulty if the natives we send out are used to build forts for guns to bombard us, but a native chief I know of here says that the Boers dare not touch his people as his over-chief (Lerothodi, the Basuto head chief) has forty thousand men, well armed, at his command, and would attack the Free State at once if his subjects were molested.

It may be asked why the British don't turn the Basutos upon the Free State. The answer to this is that if the Basutos got the better of the Dutch they would then attack the English, for though they like the English much

better than the Dutch, if they once get to fighting I do not expect they would discriminate one white from another, especially as they have never been really beaten.

I think there is no doubt the Boers have put up more forts around us, and we are daily expecting more bombarding, this time probably on a larger scale. It has been rumoured all the last week that the new bombardment was to begin next day, but so far it has not done so. The longer it is put off the better we shall be pleased for many reasons. The De Beers people are making a big gun, and seem to think that it will be satisfactory; it will carry about a thirty pound shell, and if anything like successful should have a range nearly twice that of any gun we have at present. Our gunners seem to be much better shots than the Boers, so we hope they will be able to amuse themselves and instruct the Boers with the new gun, which is expected to be ready in about a week.

One of our men, in fact he is the contractor who built this house, is reported to have made a splendid shot one day last week. The cattle go out a little way to graze, with a strong body of mounted men as a guard, but this guard seems to be placed on the Kimberley side of the cattle. On the other side of the cattle a number of crack rifle shots are scattered behind

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stones or whatever cover they can get, and fire at any Boer within range. The Boers have a similar lot of "snipers" out. Our man is said to have killed a Boer sniper at over two thousand yards' range.

By the way, I think I have forgotten to tell you of our last military order. This came out some time ago, and is that all lights have to be put out at 9.30 P.M. This is to make people careful of their paraffin and candles. Of course some permits are allowed, and equally of course I have one, as I often read after going to bed. The rule is not rigidly enforced in case of illness, but people have to show evidence that there is illness in the house if so required.

January 21st.—The great event of the week has been the completion and trial of the new gun. Here I was interrupted, and have had no further chance to write until now, January 26th, and in the meantime we have had so much to think about that we have not worried about the big gun. On the morning of Wednesday, the twenty-fourth, the Boers began to shell us again quite early in the morning, and we soon found that it was quite different to the shelling we had had before. The shells came from all sides, and as we found out later at least eight guns were at work. None of them were bigger than they used before, but they were either bet-

ter guns or better worked and had better ammunition, for they reached every part of the town except one small area near the De Beers Mine.

January 28th.—Busy again till now. Most of the shells are the kind we are used to; just like those we had in the first bombardment, but a good many were also the shrapnel, which I told you about before and which are much more dangerous. The bombardment went on all the twenty-fourth, all that night, and all the twenty-fifth until about 9.30 P.M., and then slackened, though a few shells came in on the twenty-sixth, but nobody was hurt. I suppose even this has been child's play to the bombardment of Mafeking, but it has been quite bad enough. During the two days about eight hundred shells were fired in. The hottest time was, as usual, from about 3 A.M. to 8 A.M., and again late in the afternoon, especially down in Beaconsfield at the latter time. Previously no shells had reached us, but they have been all round us this time. We did not bother much about them on Wednesday morning, though we could hear the whiz pretty distinctly and then the report, which showed they were not far away. However, just as we were sitting down to breakfast one whizzed past apparently very near to the house end and burst close by, only about one hundred



and fifty yards away. Our house is almost directly between the place it dropped and the Dutch gun, so it must have gone very close to us. It was a shrapnel, and it is just as well it missed us.

Another dropped about a hundred yards from the same end of the house, and wrecked a building just at the back of the military office where all the work is done, but no one was hurt. When I got to the office, at 8.30 A.M., Mackenzie told me he had been called out to see a girl who had been killed by one. She had been in one of the shell-proof pits and came out and was dressing in her room, thinking that the danger was over, but a shell came along and burst, and a big piece of it struck her in the back, breaking her spine and almost cutting her in half. Fortunately it killed her instantly. This was the only casualty that day. There were heaps of hairbreadth escapes, but no one else was touched so far as I know.

One shell went through Rudd's house. He is the son of C. D. Rudd, who has been associated with Rhodes in some of his big schemes. He took his family away when war seemed likely, and stored a good deal of his furniture in one room. This was the room where the shell burst, wrecking everything about it. Another went through a patient's house into a bed-

room and fell under the baby's cot, but did not explode. Another exploded under the bed in which was an Indian woman who had been confined only four days. It burst and set the bedding on fire, but hurt neither the mother nor the child, and a second one came into the same house later in the day, but without hurting any one.

The De Beers big gun kept pounding away in answer to all this, but was only one against eight or nine, and being new the men were not quite used to its management and it did not do much. We heard, a day or two after this, that one of the shells had killed three Boers.

In the afternoon I usually take Agnes out with me most of the time, so I told her I had to go round into several of the places where the shells were coming pretty thick, and suggested that she had better stay at home. She, however, is very plucky and does not worry about the shells a bit, so she said she would come the same as usual, for if a shell hit me it might as well hit her too. We went along all round and did the work, but several shells came within a hundred yards of us. Wherever we went they seemed to follow us round. In Beaconsfield the gun with which the Boers are trying to hit Rhodes and the Sanatorium dropped one fairly near us. We picked a big chunk of it

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up in the main road a few minutes after, still hot. This gun gives Beaconsfield and the main road leading from Kimberley past the Sanatorium to Beaconsfield a very warm time. Several shells have dropped into the main road, one just in front of a tram full of people. One went through an outhouse on Ruffel's grounds. (Mrs. R. and Katie are in Cape Town.) Several fell just outside the hospital, and one dropped in the Catholic Orphanage grounds.

This gun kept firing at intervals all Wednesday night, and some of the others joined it now and then. We went to bed as usual, for our special gun seemed quiet, and we slept till about 4 A.M. Then something woke me, and I heard two shells go over the house, or very close by, and burst somewhere quite near. Our house faces the gun that fires these shells, so we concluded that downstairs was the safest place. I took our mattresses down into the hall and put them on the floor by the hat-stand, where the wall is thickest, and was just going to turn in when the Mayor came to fetch me to see his wife. I went over to his house, and found the shells dropping very close there, but fortunately the patient did not know they were so close and so was not nervous. The Mayor sent me home in his own cart.

At my door I found a policeman, who wanted me to go and see a family who had been



Mr. Rhodes.

THE SANATORIUM, WITH A MAXIM GUN ON THE VERANDA.

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smashed up by a shell. I drove straight off to the house he told me, and found two poor little children badly hurt. They were not in their own house, but just across the street, where they had been carried. One, six years old, had his shoulder shattered and the whole side of his head and face torn open; the other, a year or two younger, had an arm and a leg both broken badly and several wounds in the chest. I put them both into the cart and sent them straight off to the hospital, and was then told that the mother was in her own house also badly hurt. I went across and found her lying on the floor, with her leg wrapped up in a towel. An ambulance man was there, and he told me that he had just fastened it up and that it was a beastly wound. I sent the mounted policeman for the ambulance, and told the man to bring her along to the hospital when it arrived. Another child was just grazed with a splinter of the shell.

They were all (mother and six children) just ready to begin breakfast when the shell burst right in the middle of them. The father is a volunteer, and is away at one of the camps. It is strange that he is said to be a prominent member of the Bond, and has all along said the Boers were in the right. Whether he thinks so now I don't know.

I went straight off to the hospital and began

on the worst hurt child. The arm was hopelessly shattered, and I had to take it off at the shoulder joint. The head injury was a jagged wound from above and behind the ear to the corner of the mouth, turning the ear down upon the neck, breaking the jaw in two places, and ploughing up all the side of the face. There was also a big wound on the arm, and a fair-sized one on the hip. The wonder and the pity was that the poor little chap was not killed outright. I fixed him up as well as I could, expecting him to die under my hands all the time, but he lived about three hours. Watkins turned up while I was busy, and took on the other child, and as soon as I was free I attended to the mother. She had all the fleshy part of the calf ripped up right to the bone, and the wound went down to the heel. I was very doubtful whether I ought not to take the leg off then and there, but there seemed a possible chance of saving it, so I fixed it up as well as I could and waited developments. She was in rather poor condition, having been confined only three weeks previous, so the developments soon began. Forty-eight hours after the leg was beginning to go gangrenous, and I took it off above the knee. To-day, seventy-two hours after, she is better than she has been yet, but is not by any means out of danger.

'And this is what the Boers call fair play! Of the previous bombardment their commandant wrote to his chiefs that he directed his guns to the middle of the town to do as much damage as possible, and this is their aim again now. They must know that nearly all the men are in the forts, and that very few people except women and children are left in the town, and yet they fire not at the forts but into the town. I have no doubt they will say they fired at the forts and their shells went too far, but we shall not believe that.

All that day the shelling went on until about 9.30 P.M., and since then we have had practically none. Twice that afternoon I very narrowly escaped a shell. At one house I called I was talking on the veranda for some time, and within twenty minutes of that a shell fell into the garden between the veranda and the road not ten feet from where I had been. Again I had just gone across the Market Square at Beaconsfield and got to the corner when a shell fell just where I had crossed not one minute before. No one can imagine the relief it was when the shelling ceased. It is not altogether a question of fear, but the knowledge that wherever you are a shell may drop on you at any moment, and that you have to do your work all the same, does not much exhilarate you. I



suppose if a doctor gets killed on duty his patients will promptly say how incautious he was to come out, but if he stays at home they say he is a coward.

To-day, Sunday, I don't think a shot has been fired on either side, but there are many rumours as to what is in store for us to-morrow. More guns, bigger guns, and closer to us is what most of the rumours amount to, but no one knows whether there is any truth in it all. Nearly the whole town has been busy building shell-proof shelters, but we have decided not to do so. Our house is pretty solid, and unless they bring very big guns to bear upon us we are only liable to be reached by the shells that come from the long side of the house, in the direction in which most of the windows face. If we keep in the bottom story and in the hall I do not think we can be damaged. All the shells that have burst have done so in the first room they entered, and only the pieces go through into the second room if the wall is very flimsy. Our walls are solid, so I think we should be pretty safe in the hall either where the bookcase is or at the other end by the hat-stand.

The shell-proof places are ghastly little dog holes, like the Black Hole of Calcutta, in most cases. Some of the rich people have put up good ones, double layers of sandbags built up on their

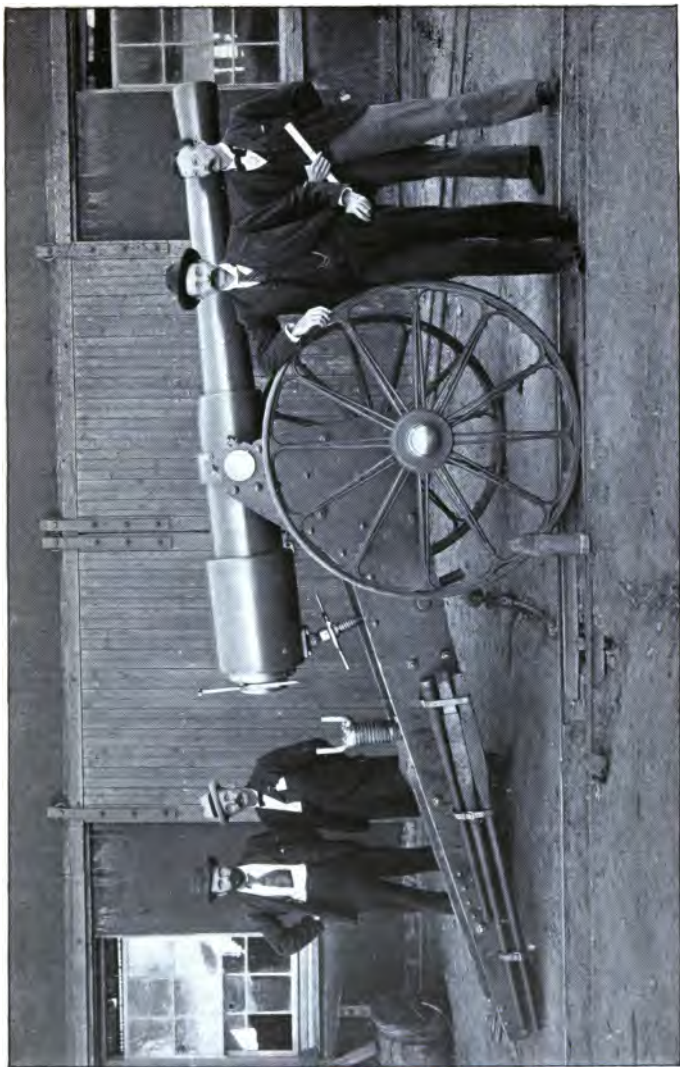
verandas to a decent height and roofed either with sheet-steel or old railway iron or thick deals with plenty of sandbags on the top of them, and in these there has been some attempt at ventilation. But the poorer people have dug holes in their yards or gardens and roofed them with anything that came handy, and then either sandbags or the loose earth out of the hole was put on top. In these you can't stand up, and there is no ventilation at all, so they are about as deadly as the Boer shells, but plenty of people seem to find comfort in being in them. One woman I know fled into hers early on Wednesday morning and never came out till late Friday afternoon, but she is the one who had a shell through her house in the first bombardment, so she was likely to be timid.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OUR BIG GUN AND THE BOERS' BIGGER ONE

Now, having finished about the bombardment while it was fresh in my mind, I must go back and mention the De Beers gun. We had heard rumours that a big gun was being made for some time before the second bombardment, and we soon heard from the men at the De Beers machine shops that it was true. I did not go down to see it until it was nearly done, but I looked in a few days before it was completed, and took Agnes down next day, as she was interested in it. The gun has since been christened "Long Cecil," but many of us prefer other names for it. My favourite is "The De Beers Baby," but another good one is "St. Cecilia."

It is a splendid piece of work, especially when you consider that many of the tools necessary to do the rifling and other complicated work had to be made in the shops, and that the men



Mr. Berry, Mr. Paley,  
Foreman of Asst.  
Workshops. Engineer.

Mr. Labram, Mr. Gough,  
Chief Engineer Draughts-  
De Beers Company. man.

"LONG CECIL" AND HIS MAKERS.

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were not used to the work, and that even the material used was only, so to speak, makeshift. The gun is about ten feet long, and is built upon the Woolwich Infant principle, slender near the muzzle, thicker in the middle, and very much thicker at the breech. The narrow part is about nine or ten inches through, and the thickest part at the breech about twenty or so. The shell it carries is 4.1 inches in diameter, and weighs twenty-eight and a half pounds. Of course a proper gun carriage and everything complete was made at the same time, and at last all was in order. There was great speculation as to what would happen the first time the gun was fired, but the people principally concerned were confident that he would be all right, and so he was.

They took him out of the shop on the morning of January 19th, and pointed him at the midway pumping station half way from here to Riverton, about sixty-five hundred yards from where he was fired, and let him go. To everybody's delight, he reached it quite easily. The Boers have had a big camp there all the time, as it was out of reach of our other guns, and there were good buildings and plenty of water there. After a few shells had been dropped pretty close the Boers were seen to be buzzing about and departing, like a hive of bees when a brick

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is thrown into it. A few days afterwards our men caught a Dutch despatch rider, and in his pouch was a letter from a Boer to his home people, describing their consternation when the shells began to drop about them as they were at breakfast.

The gun did very good shooting that day. They took it back to the shop to make the powder chamber larger, so that it would hold seven pounds of powder, instead of five and a half, and so increase the range, but somehow this did not seem to improve the shooting, and though it has done good work during the bombardment the men seem to think it is not so accurate as before. On the same day that the gun was tried I see in my diary that we had a new vegetable issued to us—the common or household mangold wurzel. Horse-flesh and wurzel does not sound luxurious, but they would be all right if there were only plenty of them. The wurzels are the globe yellow sort and are very good, not to be distinguished from the beet except by the colour.

February 2d.—Thank goodness the expected heavy bombardment has not come off. Every day a few shells have dropped in, but only a very few, most days only three or four, so we have had quite a holiday. "Long Cecil" fired one shot early on Monday and no more, and

later on we learned that he deranged his mechanism with that shot, and had to go back to the shop again. He was to have been all right again to-day, but has not been fired, so perhaps he is still out of gear. All this time I have been wanting to send money to the Cape. I kept waiting and waiting, hoping that we should get relieved, but early in January I thought I would wait no more. I went to the bank and got a draft in duplicate just in the usual way, and then I prevailed upon the military people to let me send the duplicate drafts off by their despatch riders, with a short letter, on two different nights, hoping that at least one of them would manage to get through. About a week after this the banks made an arrangement by which the military would flash money to the relief column, and so on to Cape Town, by the search-light. So then I wished I had waited a little longer. About a month afterwards the authorities told me that neither of the despatch riders had got through and neither of them had returned, so they were either dead or prisoners. This was cheerful, for my drafts were probably in the hands of the Boers.

February 4th.—To-day we have had a new sort of food—donkey, instead of horse-flesh. The butcher who serves me always delights in trying to harrow up my feelings by telling me



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what the meat is, but I guess he will soon give up, for I always say, "All right, as long as it is meat it is all the same to me." A few days ago my driver told me that a Chinaman had been offering Mackenzie's driver a good price for cats, which he wanted to eat—5s. 6d. for small ones and 12s. 6d. for large ones. We have not come to that yet, but the Chinese are fond of cats at all times. The bread ration in town has been cut down within the last few days; previously it was fourteen ounces per head, now it is only ten and a half, so stores have to be husbanded very carefully. For the last few weeks we doctors, or rather the careful and conscientious ones of us, have been having great difficulties with food permits. The regular rations issued consist of bread, horse-flesh or beef, mealie meal, and crushed mealies, with vegetables about once in ten days, and tea or coffee and sugar. For the last few weeks nothing more of any description is allowed to be sold without a doctor's written order.

The doctors all have orders not to give permits except in cases where the people are sick, and then only in very moderate quantities. As I have said before every patient demands a permit for something, many of them being manifestly in robust health. The usual story was "I won't eat horse-flesh, and so I must have something else." My answer to these people has invari-

ably been: "Our orders are that we are not in any way to help people who refuse to eat horse-flesh, therefore you can wait till you are hungry enough to eat it or you can starve. You will get no permit from me."

The fat Jews, who have always lived on the best of everything naturally do not like this, and so they go off to some other man whom they can bully, blarney, or bribe and get whatever they choose to ask for, cursing me fluently all the time. They say their religion forbids them to eat horse.

Several of the doctors are notorious for giving permits to anybody. We can only suppose that they make the people pay for it. I am afraid I am notorious in the other way, and consequently am not particularly beloved. However, I have done the right thing, and none of my sick people have had any reasonable request refused.

None of this trouble would have arisen if the army doctor, who is really responsible for the proper issue of the medical comforts, had been a man of determination, but he has no backbone and is too fond of red tape. He professes to be too busy to look into these things carefully. If he had gone into things, even superficially, he would have discovered the offenders easily.

At last about a week ago the Food Supply

Committee told the colonel that the permit system was being scandalously abused, as the comforts meant for the sick were being frittered away on perfectly healthy and strong people. The colonel appointed a committee to enquire into it, and both Mackenzie and I were members of it. I had on several occasions worried the colonel myself, so he knew I was interested in it. We devised a stringent system of issuing permits, which I hope will work much better, but the supervisor is hopeless. He seems absolutely to have no intelligence whatever. For instance, one rule is that no patient shall draw more than one comfort except in cases of urgent need, and then must have a written explanation of their case on the back of their permit. The sensible way seems to me to be this: Let the doctor issue one of the articles ordered at once, and then visit the patient and satisfy himself that the others are really required before issuing them. As it is now all the articles are issued at once, and then enquiries are made to see if they were really needed. I got a penal clause put into the rules providing that any doctor not acting up to them should, at the discretion of the colonel, forfeit his right to sign permits, but I'm afraid it won't be acted upon. These rules were just a month too late, in fact on the first day they were in force the last tin of butter in

the town was issued, whereas if it had been taken proper care of and only issued to the sick there would have been enough to last through the siege.

After February 4th things proceeded quietly until the seventh. On that morning I was called to a confinement case in one of the outlying parts of the town rather near one part of the Boer lines. While there, in addition to the usual intermittent shelling with the artillery of both sides, I heard a much bigger gun begin. There was a big boom, then a tremendous whiz somewhere over or near the house I was in, and then by-and-by a good big boom when the shell burst. I was pleased at this, as I thought this was "Long Cecil" opening on the Boers at Carter's Farm. When I came out after it was all over my driver, Daniel, looked pretty sick, and said, "The Boers have got a big gun at Kamfersdam and are firing into the town with it." And so it was. He said the shells were falling near the Market Square, which I wanted to cross. This looked cheerful, but I had to go up town, so we drove off. When we nearly got to the square we heard a shell strike close to us, but we did not stay to enquire. Later on I found out that this shell had dropped into a house on the left side of the street and, exploding, killed a horse in a shoe-

ing forge on the right side of the street, less than a hundred yards behind me. If I had been coming up about one minute later that piece might easily have got me. A piece of the same shell flew diagonally through an open window in the De Beers office, at which a friend of mine was sitting, passed him without touching him, struck an iron safe, bounced off that to the wall, and from there into the fireplace, where it stopped. The piece weighed eleven pounds, and my friend departed without waiting to put on his hat. The gun kept on firing until mid-day, when it stopped to cool and to let the Boers have dinner, but it started again about three in the afternoon, and went at it hot and strong. About four I was at Ruffels calling for messages and heard a big shell come over and burst not very far away, and then I came down to the house for tea. When I got near I saw a lot of people rushing up the lane along the long side of the house, and I found that this shell had landed in our next door neighbour's stable. There was a very sulphury smell in the air and a big cloud of dust, but our house seemed to be all right. I rushed indoors and called for Agnes, and she answered that she was all right, neither of the servants hurt, and the house untouched.

Agnes was upstairs putting on her hat to

come out with me when she heard the shell whiz and explode, and saw the whole stable roof lift up. Fortunately the shell fell in soft ground and went in some way before bursting, so the pieces did not fly, and beyond wrecking the building no damage was done. Our house was filled with dust, and smoke and splinters of wood, and roofing flew over into our garden. A few fair-sized stones came over, too, one weighing about six pounds, and two whole sheets of galvanised iron; one of these fell on our beet-root bed and the other cut the cord of the veranda blind and notched the veranda rail.

Our domestic took shelter under her bed, but was unearthed unhurt without difficulty. Agnes was ready to go out with me, so I took her out, as she did not feel safe in the house. Up to this time she had stood the shelling splendidly, but this was coming a bit too close to be pleasant, and rather took "the curl" out of us both. While we were on our rounds we went into Ruffel's branch shop near the station, and a piece of shell was shown to us which had just dropped through the roof there. It was a solid piece, of about eight pounds' weight and an inch and a half thick, and made us appreciate the value of bomb-proof shelters. Later on (they were shelling all the time) we had to go into the De Beers workshops, and there we found one

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of the big shells which had not exploded. It had fallen out on the veldt at the back of the hospital.

The people who picked it up took it to Rhodes, and he gave them £5 for it. He sent it down to the shops to have the powder taken out of it and to get polished up. Down there they handled it very gingerly, for only a few weeks before we had had news from Mafeking of a blacksmith's trying to open a similar shell, when it exploded, blew off his legs and one of another man's, and killed a third man. So they had good reason to be careful, and let it soak in a tub of water for a few hours.

My driver had seen one of the men who picked this shell up, and told me he said it was as big as the hand-bag that I carry instruments about in. Seeing that this came from a coloured man, of course I did not believe it, but it proved to be rather under than over the truth, for this infernal affair was eighteen inches and a half long, six inches in diameter at the base, and weighed eighty-seven pounds. We found later that these shells were not very accurately made, many of them being twenty inches long and weighing considerably more than the regulation one hundred pounds. As you can imagine, the sight of this did not encourage us, for we knew that a gun big enough to carry this shell could



BOER 100-POUND SHELL AND DE BEERS 9-POUNDER.



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reach any part of Kimberley or Beaconsfield, so there was no possibility of getting out of its range; and we also saw that there was no building in Kimberley, except perhaps the strong rooms at the banks, that would not be penetrated easily by it.

Fortunately, the gun was fired from a place almost directly opposite the front-door end of our house, so if we kept either in the little passage at the back of the dining-room or, better still, in the covered way between the house and the kitchen-block we should be fairly safe; for we had come to know from experience that a shell is usually exploded by the first wall it touches, but that it has sufficient impetus to carry it through that wall, and actually bursts in the first room it comes into. Coming from the direction they did, these shells would have to come through at least two pretty solid walls before they reached the other end of the house, and this made us feel fairly safe. The shelling went on until about dark and then stopped, greatly to our relief. The damage done was not great; two men were a little hurt by splinters of wood, and a child was more seriously hurt, and subsequently died, not exactly from the shell wound but undoubtedly partly through its effect.

Next morning we expected to be roused quite

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early by the big gun, but to our great delight it did not start, and as the day crept on all sorts of rumours began to fly about, the favourite one being that "Long Cecil," who had been pounding away manfully at this Boer gun all the previous day, had smashed it.

When lunch-time came and no big gun, we began to feel quite cheerful; but about four o'clock the enemy began again, and for some time heaved a shell into us every two minutes. They could not keep that up long, however, as of course the gun got hot and had to cool off. One of the early shells burst in the air and a piece of it dropped through a roof near the bank and knocked a man's brains out, killing him on the spot. Another came into a photographer's establishment opposite the Club, burst on the pavement, and fragments of it flew on to the Club veranda and out at the side, one of them rising high again and knocking the cross off the end of the Catholic church at the side of the Club. A patient of mine got a chunk of this in his leg as he stood at the Club. Just where the shell came through the photographer's wall a big portrait of Rhodes hung, and the shell landed squarely in the middle of this, knocking it into smithereens. A little later on another shell dropped into a big shop next door to S——'s, and set fire to it. The whole place

burned down, and S——'s house caught fire also, but they managed to put this out.

When this happened I had only just left S——'s private house, where I had been seeing Mrs. S——, who was ill. S—— and I had been joking (we had to joke to keep up our spirits) about the shells, and he had asked me to give him some medicine to make his knees feel stronger when the gun went off; the very next minute his shop was nearly destroyed.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE RUSH FOR SHELTER

AGNES still declared she did not want a shelter made on our premises; but I could see she was a good deal shaken by these unpleasant visitors, so I went to Gardener Williams and asked him to let me have timber and iron from the De Beers stores, with a white overseer and some natives to build a fort. He was very good, and consented at once. I felt sure Agnes would be happier with a shelter, and we neither of us felt very safe sleeping upstairs, when the gun was liable to fire at any moment, and the first shell might be the very one to drop on us; if we got a fort we could sleep all night in it, and not have to turn out as soon as the gun began.

On this second day of the big gun's *régime* a system of signalling was established, which was a great help to us. The gun was firing ordinary powder and not cordite, so it made a

big puff of smoke each time. This could easily be seen from the conning tower and other prominent positions in the forts. The moment the lookout on the conning tower saw the puff, he would wave a red flag, and a bugler standing by him would blow the alarm. The gun was about three and a half miles from us, so there was an appreciable interval between the puff of smoke and the arrival of the shell. If the bugler got his little tune off promptly there was about fifteen seconds' warning, and this gave one plenty of time to dodge under a wall or put up an umbrella (one man was actually seen to do this!), or rush into a fort. Often, however, the interval was much less. At the Sanatorium there was a lookout station on the roof, from which the puff of smoke could be seen, and the watcher there banged on the dinner gong for all he was worth each time the ominous signal appeared. We decided Rhodes was having plenty of meals when we heard the gong going so often, and were much amused when we found out that it was a shell signal.

At another place the lookout used to hammer one iron bar against another which was hung up by the end. This is a cheap sort of bell which is common in this country, and can be heard a long way. From many places anxious watchers could see the red flag waved, though

they did not hear the alarms, and in front of the town-hall a policeman was stationed in an auctioneer's pulpit to blow his whistle when he saw the signal. On the whole, we had music in great quantity and variety during these days.

Next day, February 9th, was about the worst of all, for they pumped shells into us almost all day, only stopping for refreshments or to cool the gun. They began about 6 A.M. and went on till dark. About nine a shell went into a house near the station, killing a baby in its mother's arms and badly injuring the poor woman. At first she did well, but she took a wrong turn about thirty hours later, and died on the third day. Another shell went through a store close behind me while I was seeing patients at the office, and scattered pieces on the roof above my head, but I sat tight and went on with the prescription I was writing. All the same I was badly scared, for it is not nice to know that the last shells have fallen somewhere near you, and then to hear the bugle go again, yet to continue quietly what you are doing, with your ears pricked up for the boom of the gun and the *whiz*, wondering all the time whether this is the one that is going to get you or not. When you hear the shell bump into some other building and burst with a crash you are happy at once, for you know you are safe for this time

at least. The innate selfishness of human nature shows up too strongly under such circumstances to grieve over the other fellow.

We soon found that if the shells burst in a building the pieces were stopped and could not fly; but if they burst in the air or struck hard rock or road they would fly in a fearful manner, some of them going hundreds of yards, buzzing like a steam-saw all the time. These pieces were far more dangerous than the shell itself, and we did not like them a bit. A fair proportion of the shells did not explode, either because they were bad or because, being fired at a very short range for so large a gun, they struck on their sides and not on their points. Some of them ricocheted off hard ground and went half a mile before dropping again. The fragments sometimes weighed as much as twenty pounds, but more usually were from two to ten. The latter, however, were quite big enough for our taste.

By-and-by we found that there was a certain sort of method in the firing. They would point the gun at some particular object, the town-hall and the conning tower being the favourite ones, and fire eight or ten shots till the gun was hot. Then they would point it somewhere else for eight or ten shots, and so on. As a matter of fact, their marksmanship was disgraceful; I



## 130    BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

don't think they once hit anything they aimed at, but they did a fair amount of damage all the same. Sometimes they departed from this rule and fired anyhow, no two shots in the same direction, and then things were not pleasant. Taking it all around, it was not pleasant work going to see patients when the firing was on; but if the enemy were firing in one quarter one had to leave those patients until they had slewed the gun round a bit to another part, thus dodging the exposed sections as much as possible.

I think the doctors' drivers had the worst job of all, for they had to sit in the carts and wait, whilst we were in the houses. As a matter of fact, the houses were little if any safer than the open, but somehow you felt safer inside than out. Several drivers chucked up their jobs and ran away, but mine stuck to his work like a brick and never flinched or hesitated wherever he had to go, though he admitted he was often badly scared. That was precisely my own feeling. I was badly scared most of the time, but the work had to be done, and I felt that if a shell was destined to hit me it would do so, whether I was in or out, in a shelter or not; so, though I did not try to get in the way, I went about my work as usual, and never missed a single office hour or visiting a



THE KIMBERLEY TOWN HALL.

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single patient on account of the shells. And I think all the doctors did the same. You may be sure my driver lost nothing by sticking to his post. When we were relieved I gave him £10 and our Zulu boy £5, for the latter had come and done his work just the same as usual in spite of the shells.

It was on February 9th that the De Beers people began to put up my splinter-proof shelter. It was placed in the passageway between the dining-room and the store-room, and the entrance to it was just outside the back door of the house proper. The passage was nearly seven feet wide, so there was plenty of room. First of all strong steel plates (five eighths of an inch thick) were put up against the wall of the dining-room; then a framework of huge mine-props twelve inches thick was erected; the roof was made of similar timbers, seven feet high; and on top of these timbers another steel plate was laid. The shells could not come from the kitchen side at all, so we left that wall just as it was. Finally the two sides were built up with sacks filled with earth taken out of the garden and laid endways, so that a shell or splinter would have to come through quite two feet of earth before getting at us. We were late beginning our fort, and nearly all the sacks in town were gone, but I went round to several

## 132 BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

of the bakers and managed to ferret out a good pile of them. It took a lot of earth to fill the sacks, and this had to be dug out of the garden. I had a nice patch of barley growing for my horses, but this all went into the sacks, together with lots of bulbs and other garden stuff. I knew the bulbs would not be hurt, but the rest of the truck would be beyond resurrection. Still, unfortunate as this was, it seemed of little importance when we heard a big shell smash through the wall.

On the first day the fort did not make much progress, as the boys were sawing the timbers the right length and getting the material together. I think they liked working for us; we gave them lime juice to drink, as it was so hot, and they said they were very hungry, so we got them some big chunks of very coarse brown bread, which they seemed to appreciate. Everybody was on short commons at this time, and I fancy the compound boys were getting little except mealie porridge, and none too much of that.

By the way, I ought to have noted that about this time I sold one of my horses to be killed and eaten. He was one of the original horses I bought when I took over the practice, and had done heaps of good work for me. Before the war, as he was getting old, I turned him out

to grass on a farm, meaning to let him end his days in peace there, and only getting him in for a few weeks now and then to relieve a sick or lame horse. When the war broke out, however, I had to take him back or let the Dutch steal him, so for a time I kept three horses, but forage got so scarce that I had to get along with two. I would never have sold him to be worked and hammered about in a Scotch cart, but now it was a case of either turning him out to die of starvation on the veldt or selling him to be eaten. So I sent the poor old chap to the butcher, and he went to feed the Lancashires. He fetched £13.

The shelling on this day, February 9th, went on till dark. One shell went through Watkins' back fence into a shed where carriages were stored, and smashed a Victoria into little bits, but did not explode—fortunately for Watkins. Another (and this is about the most wonderful escape of the siege) fell into a room where a lady was in bed, just missed her hip, broke the side of the bedstead into bits, and harmlessly buried itself in the foundation under the floor. Had it exploded she would have been blown into little bits.

The last shell that night was the biggest tragedy of the siege. It went into the Grand Hotel, at the corner of the Market Square, and killed

## 134    BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

George Labram, the chief engineer of the De Beers Company. He, of all the people in Kimberley, had probably done more to frustrate the plans of the Boers and make things unpleasant for them than anybody else. He fixed up the new water supply when our proper supply was cut off, he made the shells for our guns to use, and it was he who manufactured "Long Cecil," actually having to make for himself many of the necessary tools for the rifling. In many other minor ways he had helped the military to worry the Boers.

He was an American, and just as smart as they make them even in America, and was a first-rate fellow into the bargain. He had had several narrow shaves with the shells, but this day it seemed as if he were somehow singled out. Coming away from the machine shops at half past five, a shell very nearly got him, and then he came to the hotel for dinner. His room was on the top floor, and the hotel was directly in the big gun's line of fire when it was aimed at the town-hall, so it was really not a safe place at all.

Labram stayed downstairs in the hotel till the firing seemed to have ceased and then he went up to wash before dinner. In these few moments a final shell came along and killed him. He was shockingly crushed; the only

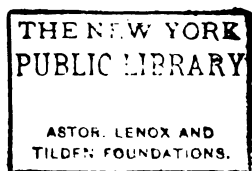


OUR SHELTER—EAST SIDE.



OUR SHELTER—WEST SIDE.





consolation was that death must have been instantaneous, and he could have felt no pain. To add to the strangeness of it all, one of the hotel servants was in the room at the same time and he was not touched.

The poor chap's wife was away in America, so the De Beers Company arranged to have the body embalmed as well as they could and have it soldered up in an air-tight coffin, in order that he might be taken home and buried later on. This accident, as you may well imagine, cast a heavy gloom over us, for everybody knew and liked the man, and none of us could help realising that his own turn might come next.

All this day, besides the work on private shelters, big public shelters were being made wherever there were convenient places. These were made by the De Beers Company's boys and the natives who were working on the roads for the Relief Committee. Most of the shelters were made in the sides of the *débris* heaps which were almost all over the town; a deep trench was cut in the sloping sides of the heaps, and this was lined and roofed with timber and galvanised iron, a thick layer of earth being thrown on the top and banked up against the front face of the shelter. Several of these shelters were many yards long and had several openings, so that people could get in and out easily.

In Beaconsfield on one side of the main road there was a large heap with an almost perpendicular face, and here they drove tunnels straight into the heap; it looked very queer from the road to see these catacombs and their inhabitants. The big bridge which carried the road over the railway near the station was made into a shelter by leaning timbers against the sides of it, putting steel plates next them, and then banking up with sandbags and loose earth. Many people who lived near the station took refuge under trenches in the station building, in the engine sheds, in the ashpits, and under the engines, of which we had a dozen or more in Kimberley.

Speaking of the railway reminds me that a shell struck one of the rails near the station and knocked out a piece of rail twenty-two inches long, depositing it upon the roof of a hotel over one hundred yards away.

All through the bombardment the people who lived near any of the culverts which carry the rain-water off used to shelter there when shelling was going on, and many of those who lived near *débris* heaps made their own private excavations. A wide drain quite ten feet deep runs around the public gardens, and many of the better-class inhabitants made shelters in this by getting old railway or tram rails and roofing



SHELTERS FROM THE BIG GUN IN A DÉBRIS HEAP.

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a part of the drain with them, piling loose earth on top.

On the next day, Saturday, February 10th, we were all quite depressed on account of Labram's death, and because we expected heavy shelling again; but, to our relief, it did not come off, and we had comparatively few of these unwelcome visitors that day. A few came in between six and nine in the morning, and then no more till about 4.30 P.M., but we had a few of the smaller shells from guns in other parts. These, however, we quite disregarded; after the big gun we hardly minded the smaller ones at all; they seemed just as if the Boers were spitting at us.

Of course there were all sorts of reasons given why the big gun rested so long—it had burst, they were short of ammunition, etc. The real reason was that some of our men had got into a position about seventeen hundred yards from it and made things too lively for the men working it whenever they brought it out to fire.

We had at first thought that it was what is called a disappearing gun, which is worked from a deep pit, only being raised to be fired; but, as we soon found out, it was nothing of the sort; its carriage moved sideways, so it was hauled behind a strong fortification to be loaded and then pushed out to be sighted and fired, so since the moment it appeared from behind its

## 138 BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

shelter our riflemen and "Big Cecil" let fly at it and the men working it; they made the position so warm that the Boers did very little all day. Later on we heard that the two principal men on the gun were Frenchmen, and that one of our bullets curled one of them up, going clean through his head. This dodge of ours was kept up until we were relieved, and five or six of the men at the gun are said to have been killed altogether. Anyhow, it damped their ardour a good deal, and prevented their firing as much as they otherwise would have done.

I was fairly busy all the day, as I had an operation for a bad case and a lot of other work besides. In several places I found my patients who were too ill to be up lying on mattresses in their shelters—and ghastly little dog kennels lots of them were. The entrances were of course very low and narrow, to prevent splinters of shell flying in, and I had to back down into them just as I used to into the North Sea fishing-smack cabins. The atmosphere of them reminded me of the smacks, too, for they were fearfully hot, and in most of them there was not the least attempt at ventilation, though a few had pieces of iron piping stuck through the roof. During the day our own shelter advanced rapidly; the roof was all completed, the most exposed side built up to within about two

feet of the roof, and the other side nearly finished also.

About 4.30 the gun started again, and went along till nearly half past six, but very little damage was done. One small piece came through the Club veranda roof, and another slightly wounded one of the Lancashires. When the gun stopped we congratulated ourselves that we had got off easily, but we soon found we were a bit too previous. Labram's funeral had been arranged for 8 P.M., for it was sure to be a very large one, and the Boers would be able to see it and fire at the people following by daylight, so it was decided to have it after dark. The procession had hardly left the hospital gates (it is said by people who were looking out) when a rocket was sent up somewhere not far from the hospital, and the big gun started immediately, and put four or five shells very close indeed to the funeral. Some infernal traitor had no doubt told the Boers all about the funeral arrangements and sent up the rocket to let them know when it started. This sort of thing we had become quite used to, for our half-hearted special court (called "martial" because there were no soldiers in it) never convicted any traitor unless absolutely compelled to.

When the funeral was over we expected the shells to stop. I had to see a patient at the



hospital, and two more in the main road between my house and there. At nine o'clock I started out, and when about a hundred yards or so away I saw a big flash of light. As it was a dark, cloudy night I thought this was lightning. Then I heard the bugle, but did not take much notice of it, for the bugle in the camp close by always sounded at nine. A minute later I heard the boom of the gun, and presently the shell came along, so near that I cowered down under a galvanised iron fence. Not that that would be any protection, but anyhow it *felt* safer. Some pieces of shell or stones thrown up by the shell rattled on the roofs round me. I picked myself up and moved on a little to the first patient I wanted to see. A few shells passed by while I was in the house, and when I came out the patient's husband walked down his garden with me to the gate; half way down the garden *zip!* came a shell very close. We both dropped flat, pulled in our heads, and lay like a pair of tortoises, while the pieces dropped all round us; luckily, however, we were not touched.

We got up presently and went over ourselves just to see that no arms or legs or heads had dropped off, and then I moved on to the next patient, the one on whom I had operated that afternoon. She was well under morphia, but

the shells were dropping all round her house, and had frightened her a good deal. While I was seeing her one burst close by, and the pieces rattled on the roof of the room she was in. When I left her I stayed on the front veranda for a couple of minutes talking to her husband, and in a moment *bang* came a shell into a house exactly opposite where I was, but on the other side of the road. Then I went on to the hospital. Shelling is bad enough in the daytime, but it is something indescribable at night. In the day you can see where the thing lands, and if it is not too close you know you are all right and relax; but at night first you hear the bugle, and you try to sit tight and pretend you don't notice it; then comes the *boom* and *whiz*, and you have to pretend harder than ever. Even when the shell bursts and you know that that one at any rate has not got you, you don't feel happy during the next minute or two, for the splinters fly so that there is plenty of time for you to congratulate yourself on escaping the shell and then get your head caved in by one of these after-thoughts.

After I got to the hospital the shells did not seem to be quite so close. I sat on the veranda with the doctors, yarned to them, and listened to the music for quite an hour and a half. I wanted to get home, as I knew Agnes would im-

agine that I had run against a shell, but good as home seemed to be, where I was was plenty good enough while the shells were falling so thick. One landed fairly near the hospital, and a good-sized piece of it came through the roof of one of the outlying wards, struck a lamp that was burning and smashed it, carrying away a thick iron bar that supported it; fortunately, none of the patients were hit, and nothing was set on fire. After half past ten o'clock the firing slacked off a little, and on timing the shells there seemed to be about eight minutes between them, so I thought I would have time to get home between two; just as I was preparing to start, though, they began again quickly, so I decided to wait. We expected they would surely stop at midnight, for the Boers are consistent in that one respect—they don't fight on Sunday. Later on, about 11.15 o'clock, I determined to make for home after the next shell, and risk getting hit; so when it had come I set out in fear and trembling, only to be stopped at the lodge gate by a man who wanted to take me off to a case. I sent him after a cab, as it was a long way off, and kept on towards home myself. As luck would have it there were no more shells; I believe the Dutch were going by Transvaal time, according to which our half past eleven is midnight.

Agnes had been sitting in our fort, which was nearly finished, fancying that every shell had struck me. Many of those I had heard had gone very near to the house, and one only just missed it, bursting about a hundred and fifty yards further on. After the case was over I went off to bed quite calmly, for I felt sure we should have a rest all the next day, and so it proved. All the same, I turned out as soon as it was light, about five o'clock, to finish my fort. I was not at all sure that the boys would turn up to work on Sunday, so as there was not much to do I decided to complete it myself.

I had some sacks left, and began to fill these, but you don't make much progress shovelling with one hand and holding the sack open with the other. By-and-by Agnes looked over the top veranda to see what I was after, and seeing how awkward it was she came down and held the sacks while I shovelled. We had about eighteen, and just as they were all full the miner and the natives turned up. There was really not much to do except fill a gap of about two feet on one side of the fort, but as long as the boys had come I got them to alter the other side, where the entrance was. They had made a square entrance just like a doorway, and very much too large, so that fragments of shell could come in quite easily if they were from the right

direction. I made them build a sort of anti-fencing sort in front of the opening so that no horse could possibly fly in unless it had first come through the house. I also got them to narrow the doorway leaving only just room enough to squeeze through: indeed you did not want to get too much nearer or you would stick fast, it was such a close fit. Thus did not matter much in case fire, however, for we were in little danger of over-eating.

When this work was done I still needed a lot of sacks to make the place secure, so I went down to Dr. Stoney's brother and got some from him. He had promised me a few, but I found he could let me have a lot—far more than the boy I took with me could carry—so I borrowed his Scotch cart and two horses, and we tumbled the sacks in. Of course I rode home on top of the pile, much to the amusement of Dr. Stoney and his brother, who stood on their veranda and jeered at me. The former's only regret was that his camera was out of gear, for he declared that "the sight of Kimberley's boss doctor sitting on a pile of sacks in a Scotch cart, clad in dirty flannels and a big Boer hat, with a little Hottentot as driver and a raw Kaffir in a red shirt as footman was too good to be lost." One of my best patients cut me dead on the way up because he did not rec-

100. 100. 100. 100.



direction. I made them build a sort of projecting spur in front of the opening, so that no piece could possibly fly in unless it had first come through the house. I also got them to narrow the doorway, leaving only just room enough to squeeze through; indeed, you did not want to eat too much dinner or you would stick fast, it was such a close fit. This did not matter much on siege fare, however, for we were in little danger of over-eating.

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THE CONVENT SHELTER.



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ognise me, but nobody worried much about clothes at that time.

With the fresh lot of sacks the boys finished up the fort in style. I had been in too many stuffy forts that week to neglect ventilation in my own, so I built in a strong iron grating opposite the entrance, in a place where it was practically impossible for any bit of shell to come, and it answered splendidly. There was a nice current of air through all the time. When the miner took his boys away he said, "I don't know anything about shells, but if the whole house falls on that fort it won't hurt it."

That was my view, too; so long as the big gun kept in the same place we were absolutely safe, but if they started others in different quarters we might not feel so happy. The fort was seven feet square and seven high, so my six foot three had heaps of room in every direction. Agnes pinned sheets and big bath towels all round the walls inside, brought our bedding and mattresses down into it, with a looking-glass, a clock, some books, a box of sweets, and all sorts of other gear, and we had provisions close by if things were really bad; so when we had pinned a photograph of Kitchener on the wall with a big diamond brooch we felt as jolly as could be expected. We slept in the fort every night after that, for the Boers often

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started their gun at daylight, and if we were upstairs we had to keep our ears pricked up to hear the first shot and then bolt for the fort, while if we spent the night in our retreat we slumbered calmly, feeling that if a shell did happen to get us there destiny must be too decidedly against us to interfere with its workings.

Our servants were told that they could come into it any time they heard the bugle, and Lizzie took advantage of this permission for a few times when she was handy, but as a rule she did not bother, and was really very plucky. John, our Zulu, preferred to get behind the big water-tank. I don't think that would have saved him, but he was happy there, so it was all right. He was very amusing one day; we heard Lizzie lecturing him about something, and he retorted: "Don't make such a noise; I can't hear the gun go off." (The boom of that gun would have extinguished a megaphone.)

I shall not forget this Sunday in a hurry. It *was* a day. First of all, everybody was delighted that it was Sunday, for we appreciated to the full the beauties of "a day of rest" when that meant rest from shells. Kimberley is not exactly composed of Sunday-school superintendents, and as a rule, is rather bored by Sundays, but this one was a shining exception.

Then, again, everywhere you went forts were being built, and the clang of sheet-steel, railway rails, old iron railway sleepers, and the like was heard all over the place. The streets were full of carts, hand-carts, and wheel-barrows, and even natives carrying materials for forts. Many people could not get boys, the demand was so great for labour, so they had to do the work themselves. Several of the merchants had large stocks of the coarse Boer salt, which is made by crystallisation from the salt-pans, and they made forts of this. It is packed in large sacks and answered splendidly. In the first bombardment I had seen at a baker's a fort made entirely of sacks of flour. It was very efficient and a monument to his ingenuity, but I was just as pleased that I did not deal with that particular baker. The gem of the collection in the way of forts was one I saw in the Malay Camp. It belonged to a coolie, and he had a large dog in a kennel. He evicted the dog and banked up the kennel with old zinc baths and paraffin tins filled with earth. I have no doubt he was a little king in that yard, for nobody else there had a fort at all.

Towards afternoon the vague rumours of a heavy bombardment beginning directly after midnight began to take shape, but the shape was different in each house. Everybody was

sure, though, that Monday was going to be a bad day, and in the face of that it seemed immaterial whether there were to be two new big guns or twenty. Early in the afternoon notices signed by Mr. Rhodes were posted up in many places and sent around the town on a cart. These were to the effect that women and children were advised to take shelter in the two big mines. It was promised that arrangements would be made to lower them down, and make them as comfortable as possible. This, being signed by Mr. Rhodes, was looked upon as a confirmation of the rumours, and many people at once concluded that Mr. Rhodes had had private information as to what was going to happen on the morrow. A regular panic ensued in consequence.



THE SHELTER AT THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

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## CHAPTER X

### A NEW USE FOR DIAMOND MINES

LATER in the afternoon the streets were again filled, but this time with people hurrying to the mines with their children. Some carried their babies, others bore blankets or bedding, others food. It was a heterogeneous procession, but all loaded up with something. Cabs could not be got, all the horses being turned out to earn their own living, since there was no forage left except for the military horses, so every one had to walk. As I went round seeing my patients I was asked by them all what I advised them to do. I knew the mines underground pretty well, and though the places the people would go to were cool and lofty, my advice always was, "If you have a fairly strong fort of your own don't go down below."

This seemed reasonable on the face of it to me, for there must be intervals between the firing during which you could get food and a



## 150 BESIEGED BY THE BOERS

bath and so on at home, and the prospect of being shut up in the same compartment with about a hundred children was hardly sufficiently alluring to compensate for the extra danger incurred by staying above ground.

I believe Mr. Rhodes' original intention was to offer shelter in the mines to those who had no place of shelter to go to, or who had insufficient protection of their own. Many of the poor people had no means of making shelters for themselves, and could neither afford the material nor the labour necessary, and it was to these that the mines were offered. The notice, however, did not state so, and many better-class people went down. The mine-heads were crowded with people, and though the workmen began to lower them down at about half past five it was long after midnight before they were all in the mines. More than a thousand went down Kimberley Mine, and about fifteen hundred were taken into the De Beers, yet neither in letting them down nor hauling them up again, nor during their four days' stay below was there a single accident.

All this time provisions, or rather luxuries, had been getting dearer. We had a fowl for dinner, price 15s.<sup>1</sup>, and we bought some eggs for 22s.<sup>2</sup> a dozen. Vegetables were very scarce and

<sup>1</sup> About \$3.60.

<sup>2</sup> About \$5.85.

SUNDAY. I RECOMMEND WOMEN  
AND CHILDREN WHO DESIRE  
COMPLETE SHELTER TO PROCEED  
TO KIMBERLEY AND DEEPERS  
SHAFTS. THEY WILL BE LOANED  
AT ONCE IN THE MINES FROM  
8 O'CLOCK THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT  
LAMPS & GUIDES WILL BE  
PROVIDED.

C. J. RHODES

MR. RHODES'S NOTICE.

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often unprocurable; we used to make salad of a weed that grew in our garden. We had planted several beds of things that did not come up or died for want of water, but this weed came up instead, and very handy we found it.

Shelling did actually begin about seven o'clock on Monday morning, February 22d, but in a half-hearted sort of a way, and not much damage was done; in fact, the whole day's performance was a pleasant surprise, as we had expected a lively time. Our old friend was still the only big gun at work. The streets were almost deserted, for in addition to the people who had gone down the mine many had fled to Beaconsfield for safety. Beaconsfield lies at the foot of a hill, and Kimberley on the top of it, so Beaconsfield is not visible from the location of the big gun; and as there is an open space nearly half a mile wide between the two places I expect the Boers thought they were as likely to hit this as the houses, and did not care to waste shells.

The patient I operated on on Saturday moved down yesterday, also the man whose leg was hit by a piece of shell a few days ago. The gun could reach Beaconsfield with the greatest ease, and soon after this last man moved a big shell landed fairly close to his house there, but that was the only one which got so far. The

shells which flew such a distance were curious to listen to. When this one went off I was at a house about as near to the gun as I could go. We heard the shell go over, and then its noise became more and more indistinct, until when far away the usual *whiz* seemed to be quite lost, and the noise reminded me of an empty cart galloping down a country lane far away on a still night. Then it plunged into something and burst.

One of the shells fired a block of four houses in Kenilworth, but I do not think they were burnt out. Another struck the street about twenty yards from a house where one of my private nurses was nursing a patient. It did not burst, but bounced off again through an iron fence, making a big clatter, and disappeared, nobody knows where. The nurse was splendidly plucky, and so was the patient. The house in which they were was near the foot of the conning tower, and therefore was liable to be hit at any time, but neither nurse nor patient wanted any shelter. The latter lay calmly in bed and said she did not expect she would get hurt, and the nurse never flinched, but looked after her like a brick. The nurse took me to look over the back fence at a sight I don't ever expect to see again. This was a lot of Kaffir women building themselves a shelter with heavy

mine timbers. Everybody was busy, and no one could be spared to fix them up, so they were told to take the timber and build for themselves, and they did in a fashion quite indescribable.

To-day a shell went through a nice new two-storied house not far from the Sanatorium. It was built soon after mine, and by the same architect, Jarvis. He always professed to believe that the Boers were in the right, but how he will feel when he hears that they have wrecked one of his very special houses I don't know. There were twelve people scattered about the building and not one of them was touched, but most of the upper story was wrecked and will have to be rebuilt. A suit of clothes hanging up was riddled to such an extent that three more tears would have caused it to fall into little bits. It was a really ludicrous sight; no self-respecting scarecrow would be seen dead beside them.

Another shell burst in the hospital grounds about twenty yards from the side of a ward full of patients, and later on a shell dropped into an aloe thicket there, but did not burst. These aloes are very thick and tough, so they stopped the shell without leaving a mark on it. It is the nicest specimen I have seen, and will no doubt be mounted and put in the entrance hall as a trophy, if we ever do come out of our

troubles right side up. The hospital porter fished it out of the aloes and commenced to experiment upon it with a stick, giving it a good old stir-up, and smoking all the time. Dr. Russell admired his zeal, but thought him lacking in discretion, and made him put it in a tub of water before he proceeded with his experiments. By the way, a friend told me a good yarn about one of these big shells to-day. Wherever a shell falls, whether it bursts or not, there is a rush for it, as both shell and pieces are marketable if you don't wish to stick to them yourself. My friend was out with the cattle guard, and a big shell fell close to two natives who were with him and did not explode. It was rather too hot to carry off, so they fought vigorously for possession, and the victor sat down on it to take care of it till it had cooled enough for him to take it away.

I heard of another little joke to-day which amused me mightily. A certain man built a large and fine A1 copper-bottomed fort. A neighbour came to inspect it and found great fault with it, in fact condemned it altogether and strongly advised the proud owner to take his family down the mine for safety. This he promptly did. Then the neighbour, having a miserable fort of his own, took possession of the good one with equal promptness, and all was peace—until the owner returned.

To-day we had no newspaper, but a little slip came out saying, for reasons that would be explained afterwards, the paper had shut down for a time. We none of us required an explanation, for we all expected this to happen to-day. For some time there had been friction between the paper and the military censor, as the latter refused to let anything but the vaguest accounts of the siege and our general condition be heliographed through. When the big gun started several correspondents tried to wire about it, as it seemed to us it was time for our relief column to hustle a bit. But that was not the censor's idea. He flatly refused to let any information of the use of a bigger gun go through at all. Whether he actually got it out or not I do not know, but if he didn't this cast-iron phrase was surely on the tip of his tongue: "It might interfere with the military situation."

O Lord! that "military situation." It was the answer to every conundrum you liked to ask all through the siege. After this the paper got mad, and on Saturday morning dodged the censor and came out with a very strong leader on the foolishness of such censorship, and just walked into the military people all round. So we were not surprised to get no paper to-day, and we were not particularly disappointed, for there was no news at all, and we had become a little tired of the stories of the Battle of Wa-



terloo and other ancient history with which the dearth of news had been helped out. Even the Mother Siegel man had ceased to trot out new pitfalls in the way of advertisements. I do not think the paper was suppressed, but as the military possessed all the channels of information I fancy they simply shut them all up. The result was the same anyhow—no paper.

February 13th.—We had rather a rest from the shells to-day. Only about twenty came in altogether; these did a fair amount of damage all the same, and wore on the people's nerves a good deal. Many of my patients stayed in their shelters all the time, and as it was a hot day and many of the shelters were very small and stuffy they suffered accordingly. One shell struck the Presbyterian church. The English church had been hit in the first bombardment, but the Dutch church escaped altogether. It was curious to notice that many people among the Dutch took shelter in their church when the shelling was on. Either they had greater faith than the other religions, or, what is far more likely, they had had word from their friends on the outside that that edifice would not be shelled. We had lots of traitors in the place who went to and fro as much as they pleased, and though I don't think the gunners could see the Dutch church, I have no doubt

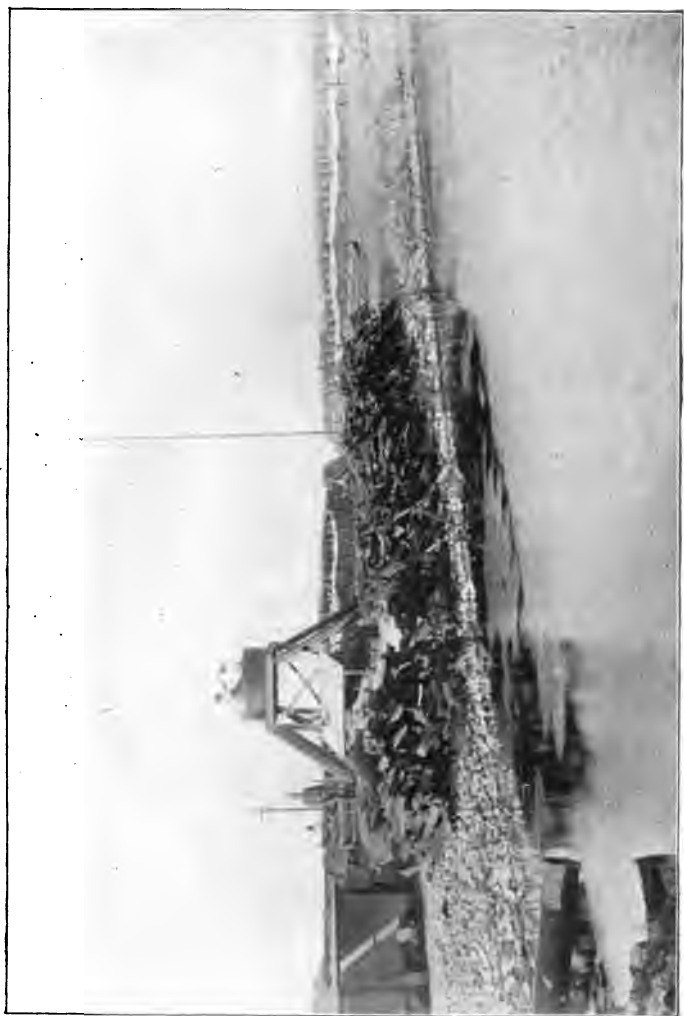
they had accurate plans of the town and could locate all the big buildings.

Two shells went into Nazareth House, the Catholic Orphanage, or rather one dropped just at the back door and the other burst overhead, and a big bit of it went through the roof into the Sisters' sitting room. This last was a shrapnel, and was the first of the big-gun shrapnels I had seen. They are not quite the same as the smaller ones which have become familiar. These have a big solid base weighing fully fourteen pounds. On this a thin steel sheet is fastened to make the receptacle for the bullets. The latter are about the size of ordinary marbles and are not loose, but lie in holes in cast-iron discs, like marbles on a solitaire board. These discs are divided into lots of small pieces by deep notches, which are so arranged that when the shell bursts the pieces will come apart easily and fly about like the bullets; each piece, moreover, has about a dozen jagged corners, and would make a ghastly wound. The discs are threaded on a wide copper tube, which conducts the flame from the fuse at the point of the shell to the charge near its base, and rips the shell open when it bursts. The steel case takes on all sorts of outlandish shapes, for it does not fly to pieces, but just gets bent and twisted up, making very queer noises as it flies through the air. I heard

one whistle just like a hooter. This particular Nazareth one looked more like the breast-plate of an ancient suit of armour or a dilapidated soup tureen than anything else.

I forgot to say that on Sunday Rhodes somehow got a message from Lord Roberts to the effect that the column was going to move to our relief at once, and every day we heard rumours of heavy firing on both sides of Spytfontein, but nothing has come of it so far.

February 14th.—To-day has been a great day. We do at last seem to have beaten the wily Boer on his own ground. Shelling began about as early as usual, but they treated us to some small shells from a gun in their old position near the Lazaretto, and one of these killed a man working in a bakery quite early in the morning. The big gun was evidently trying for the army office just behind us, and several of its shells came rather close to us when we were at breakfast. I hate to be disturbed at my meals either by patients or shells, so I sat tight and proceeded. I had got well used to the bombardment by this time, and though I had the instinct to take cover each time very well developed, I managed to resist it. We had all found, in fact, that the only thing to do was to take a good grip of yourself and sit fast. If you once gave way and let yourself



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go it was all up, and you had to strike out for the shelter every time the bugle went. I was seeing a patient in my office at the chemist's a few days before when a shell dumped itself into a store next door but one; I felt that I was urgently needed elsewhere, but still I went on talking and fixed up the patient before I went downstairs, though the pieces smacked viciously against the window and roof.

However, to return to breakfast, just as we were finishing a shell came very close, and when we rushed out to see where it was we found it had fallen and burst in the street just at the end of our yard. This was a shrapnel, too, but one of those that only explode when they strike, and consequently much less dangerous than the time-fuse ones, which burst overhead and rain bullets down on you. I think the Boers had used all their stock of solid shell, for I saw several during the day, all this kind of shrapnel. Yesterday the fourteen-pound base of one of these went through the water-tank which stands at the corner of the nurses' home at the hospital. That was the third in the grounds, and to-day several flew right over the building. One poor chap, a patient of mine, was so terrified by them that he insisted on going out, though his own place is much nearer the gun. He is very ill, and will not be able

to get much attention at home, so I am afraid he will die. I hardly think even the Boers intend to hit the hospital. These were merely bad shots at the Sanatorium, where Mr. Rhodes is staying. The shot which killed Labram was a bad shot at the town-hall, and the one which killed the woman and child I spoke of earlier was intended for the conning tower. They have never yet hit a thing they aimed at, but they have done some damage all the same. The most wonderful shell of all was one which fell to-day at Dr. Fuller's gate. It just ran its nose under the curbstones at the edge of the pavement and burst there. Two big stones were flung aside, but the biggest one, a solid blue whinstone block about twenty inches long by six inches wide and ten inches deep, was thrown right up on to the roof of the house, and from there slid gently down. There it lies now, well above the street. I hope some photographer will take a snap at it there, or you will think some one else lies as well as the stone.

So much for the Boers' day's work; now for ours. Early in the morning some natives came from Alexandersfontein to Beaconsfield, and said the Boers there had all cleared out to help another commandoe which was in difficulties or wanted to do something funny and was not strong enough to do it single-handed, or some-

thing of that sort. The Beaconsfield town guard was a bit suspicious of a trap, but sent out spies to investigate, for Alexandersfontein was an important position for the Boers, as there was plenty of water there and it was only about four miles from Beaconsfield. The spies found the native story to be quite true, and some of the town guard, with help from the Lancashires, Light Horse, and Kimberley Rifles, went out and took possession. There were a few Boers left, but not enough to make any resistance; several were killed and more wounded, amongst them a Dutch girl who was rather badly hurt in the left arm. Four were taken prisoners, and the girl was brought into the hospital as soon as possible and attended to. It is a regular Dutch performance to take women and children to the front. They have women with all the commandoes around us. I expect they imagine they are going to have a gay time looting the Kimberley shops, but that has yet to come.

After our men had taken possession of Alexandersfontein they lay low to wait for developments. Before long four waggon-loads of provisions and stores for the Boers came along, right into our men's hands before the drivers realised that the scene had changed. There was any amount of stuff there besides these four



waggon-loads, making about twelve loads altogether, so it made a fine haul—butter, vegetables, grain, mutton, pigs, poultry, and all sorts of things that we had not seen for weeks. Some of the loot was sent up to Kimberley at once.

I met the procession as I was coming in to lunch. It was first-rate, and the people turned out delighted, hoping that this was the beginning of better things. First came about twenty horses, then about the same number of cattle, and then a big waggon with a water-tank on it and drawn by sixteen lovely bullocks, so fat that our mouths watered just from looking at them. On the front of the waggon stood a man I knew in a statuesque attitude, with his rifle grounded and an "I-did-it-though-you-wouldn't-think-it-of-me" expression on his face. Oh, it was great; but the effect was rather spoiled by an excited Kaffir who was standing up on the waggon-tilt just behind him, waving a riding boot in each hand and shouting, "Look at Cronje's boots" in Dutch.

Our people sent out strong re-enforcements to Alexandersfontein, for they knew that the Dutch would return presently and would hanker after those provisions; since the place was on the flat within easy artillery range of kopjes on three sides, they expected a pretty warm

time, and they got it. Along in the afternoon the Boers did come back, and did not take to the new order of things at all kindly, but commenced to make things hum both with rifles and artillery. Fortunately, there was a fairly good cover against rifle fire, and, as I have said before, the Dutch never could hit anything at which they aimed their artillery. A lot of lead was wasted and no harm was done, but we are very much afraid our men will not be able to hold out to-morrow if the Boers get re-enforcements and try to cut them off. We cannot spare any men. We have too few already, so they may have to retire, and that is always a dangerous business.

It is rumoured to-day that General French is coming on through Jacobsdal to our relief, and is burning every Dutch laager and homestead that he comes across on the way. Certainly I saw three or four columns of smoke over in the Jacobsdal direction this afternoon, but I guess the rumour was made to fit them, for as far as we know French is over Colesburg way still. A rumour that Cronje has been captured is probably equally false. It is too good to be true. Early this morning Major Rodger, the second in command of our mounted men, got shot by the Boers when out with a scouting party in the Alexandersfontein direction. He

is a very good man, a keen sportsman, a first-rate shot, and full of the quiet, determined pluck that the men appreciate far better than hot-headed recklessness. They would follow him anywhere. He had sent some men to spy out the land behind some kopjes, and after a time saw two men coming out on the far side. Thinking they were his own troopers he rode off towards them, well in advance of the main body. When he got within about seventy yards he saw they were Boers; if he returned to his own men he knew they would shoot; ditto if he galloped up to them; and if he tried to get his revolver out of the holster they would certainly pot him before he could fire. So he pulled his horse into a walk, and went right up to them. When quite close one of them spoke to him in Dutch:

“Who are you?”

“Oh, I am one of the fighting men from Kimberley,” he answered.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the gallant pair turned round and fled over the veldt for all they were worth. When they got about half a mile away they came up to some of their own men hidden in a sluit, and then they all fired at Rodger together; but in the meantime his men had come up, and after a volley or two the Boers suddenly remembered

that it was breakfast time and went off. Rodger was hit in the left forearm, and one of the bones were broken, but he went on and finished his day's work, and only came to look for me at half past five in the afternoon. I was out, so Mackenzie saw him and wanted to order him off duty, but Rodger flatly declined, and I don't expect he will appear on the sick-list at all. The regulars call our Kimberley forces "tin soldiers," and are a little inclined to be superior with them, but if this is a sample the tin breed is the one for us.

I was down the Kimberley Mine when Rodger was looking for me. I had an hour or so to spare, and thought I would see if I could be of any help down there, though Mackenzie had been down in the morning. Still, I knew that there were a lot of small ailments amongst the people there, and as they had been down for three days a second visit would not hurt them.

I got to the mine just as they were sending the tea down. There were a thousand people to be fed, but the Company was quite equal to it. A staff of their ambulance men had been put on duty, and they were sending down huge quantities of corned beef sandwiches, in condensed milk boxes for convenience in handling, and buckets of tea and coffee with condensed milk in it. This was at a time when nobody

above ground could get either corned (tinned) beef or condensed milk without a doctor's order, and as there was a fair supply of fresh milk for the children, those down below fared better than those above. I went first down to the lowest level, fifteen hundred feet below the surface, and well as I knew the mine I was astonished to see how different it looked when full of people. They were in the large chamber cut in the rock, past one end of which the shaft runs. It is about twenty feet high and thirty or forty wide, and leads away into the mine at the far end.

The whole place was lighted up as usual with electric light, and was fairly cool, but it was just packed with people. Most of the children had been laid down to sleep on the rugs and blankets or mattresses they had brought with them, and these things just covered the floor. Except for a passage down the whole length of the chamber there did not seem to be an inch of space. I moved about gingerly for fear of treading on somebody, and saw a few people who had little troubles or wanted to know how things were up above, but the people were as good as gold, and did not make a single complaint. Many of the babies were a little feverish from the draughts, which were unavoidable, and from the rather close atmos-



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phere, but this was far better than I had expected, considering the number of people there. Except those who were looking after things, I saw hardly a single man. A few had come down at first, but public opinion had got rid of them by this time. I spent some time here talking to the people I knew. Many of them wanted to know whether I advised them to stay down or not. I said that if they were well I thought they should stay, but if they were feeling seedy and had a decently strong shelter up above I advised them to return, for the sake of the better air and conveniences.

Then I went up to the next level, twelve hundred feet down, and found things just about the same, only it was cooler and the people were, if anything, packed closer. Walking round and dodging the sleeping babies reminded me of a visit I made to that place near Brigg, where the sea-gulls nest. There you could hardly put a foot down without damaging eggs or young birds, and it was just the same here. After looking round I went up top-side again, and found more people in the tunnel, which slopes down from the compound to the cage in which the boys descend. The bottom edge of this is about thirty feet below the ground, but opens into a large space round the engine house, so that many people who did not care to go down



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below took shelter here, where they could get out into the air between the spells of shelling. This place, however, had many drawbacks; it was only about three feet wide, and when you lay down people kept walking over you all the time, so it was not really so good as the mine.

I forgot to mention, when speaking of the provisions captured at Alexandersfontein, that many of our men carried off anything that came handy in the eatable line. Some of them were busy chivvying fowls and turkeys, even when the Boer fire was hottest. But the butter was the greatest attraction. Most of it was commandeered by the military for the hospital, but I know of one man getting away with two pounds by sticking it on his arm, wrapping a handkerchief round it, and putting the whole thing into a sling as if he were wounded. Others came in with fowls and ducks slung across their saddles in regular campaigning style.

## CHAPTER XI

### RELIEF AT LAST

TO-DAY, February 15th, is almost too good to write about. Yesterday we were very skeptical about French's advance, and to-night he is here, having brought his men along one hundred and twenty miles in four days. It is almost too good to believe, and no one can realise what it means yet, it has been so unexpected. But I had better finish the story of the siege properly, having got so far. Last night at about ten o'clock we heard heavy rifle firing out at Carter's Farm and Otto's Kopje, and a Maxim got to work, too. The Maxim is easy to identify at a distance. It sounds like a street boy running along your freshly painted garden railings with a stick. We wondered what on earth was happening. Had the Boers at last plucked up courage to attack? The rattle only lasted about half an hour, so evidently there was nothing very serious. In the morning we found it

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had just been a little ruse to divert the Boers' mind and keep their attention fixed while our men brought in the captured provisions from Alexandersfontein. We wanted them too badly to risk losing them for want of a little strategy, and that which we practised was quite successful. I got my share of yesterday's loot in the shape of three very large onions and a couple of vegetable marrows, and they were "just lovely."

The big gun started at about ten o'clock, and the cordite gun at Carter's put in a good deal of work also. This latter scared me badly during the morning. I had to see a lot of patients in the district to which it was paying particular attention, and I somehow felt that relief was close at hand, as the rumours of French's advance were very persistent this morning, and yet, though no shell came near me, I could not get over a horrid feeling that it would be just my luck to get bowled over at the last moment after going scot free for so long. At one house where I called I could not make any one hear at the front door, so I went round to the back-yard gate, where I found all the children busy digging out a shell which had dropped there a few minutes before; the patient was safe in their fort. This was the last shell that small gun fired, and I think the big gun only put one

more in before it retired from business altogether. All the morning we kept hearing that the Boers were trying all they knew to rout our men out of Alexandersfontein, but did not seem altogether big enough for the job; we hoped to let it go down into history at that, but were anxious all the same.

At about half past three o'clock in the afternoon a man told me that French's column could be seen from the Beaconsfield *débris* heaps, but I did not believe it until I went over to the Club and found that it was quite true. Then I went straightway and bought the largest Union Jack I could get hold of, and Agnes tied it on a long stick and stuck it out from the end of our second story veranda for all the world to admire. We ourselves admired it more than anything else on the face of the earth just then. After that I drove up on to the veldt about a mile (out to a place where one could get a view of the surrounding country) and had a good look round. In several directions there were clouds of dust, showing that big bodies of men were on the move, but though the relief-work natives there declared they were English it was impossible to be sure. (Somehow I have forgotten to mention those relief works. They were started by Mr. Rhodes quite early in the siege. The roads of one part of the town,

which had only been acquired by the De Beers Company a few months ago, were shockingly bad, so when it became necessary to find something for natives and others who had "got no work to do" to make a living wage at, they were turned on to these roads, and several thousand of them have been working ever since, and, besides making a living for themselves, have wonderfully improved that part of the town.)

Finding that nothing could be seen from where I was, I came home to fetch Agnes, and started for Beaconsfield, in which direction it seemed most probable that our troops would arrive; but when I was passing the hospital gate I saw the ambulance go in. As my post was there when there were any wounded around, I went to see what was happening, and found two fresh wounded cases. I told Agnes where to get the best view in Beaconsfield, and sent her off alone.

Both wounded men were shot in the head. One had a depressed fracture of the skull, and I had to trephine and remove some splinters of bone that were driven in, but it was quite a simple, straightforward case, and the man will probably recover without a hitch of any sort. The other was a most interesting case. The patient, a boy of twelve, had been playing about on the outskirts of the Alexandersfontein fighting,

picking up bits of shell and other unconsidered trifles, and generally having a good time. But at last I suppose he got too venturesome and went to pick up some shell within range of the Boer rifles; they potted him right through the head, from above the right eye to above and behind the left ear. He was badly collapsed and a terrible sight. If it had been six months ago I should have said he would certainly die, but I know Mauser bullet wounds better now, and should not be a bit surprised if he pulled through all right. By the time I had fixed him up it was nearly dark, and I had missed the actual entry of the relief column, but I was in time to see the arrival of General French and his staff in the town. Agnes had seen the whole thing down in Beaconsfield, and had been one of a group of ladies who nearly pulled the first man off his horse, they were so delighted to see him.

The scene in the town and at the Club can't be described; I am not going to try to do it; but it was quieter than one would have expected; everybody was far too deeply moved to be noisy. Directly the relief was an established fact they began to haul up the people from the mines, and by midnight all were home again, none the worse for their four days' stay underground.

And so our siege is over, and though we have had nothing like so bad a time as Mafeking and Ladysmith, if all we hear about them is true, still it was quite bad enough. We all feel just what a friend said to me to-night: "If ever I am in a country where they begin to talk about war again, I shall take the first boat to the far side of the world and stop when I get there."

We have been shut up for one hundred and twenty-four days, from October 14th to February 15th, and during the whole of this time the Boers have never once attacked the town or even been within rifle shot of it. Through their friends in town they must have known, almost to a man, the strength of our defence forces, and yet they have contented themselves with shelling us from a distance. It is funny to see in the Dutch papers how every general is alluded to as "Fighting" General Snyman or De la Rey or whatever his name may be. We wonder whether there are other classes of generals—praying generals or perhaps even funkling generals.

I spoke of our defence forces just now; it will interest you to know who and what they were.

*Mounted Men.*

Kimberley Light Horse.....	335
Cape Police, about.....	300
Diamond Fields Horse, about...	150



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This makes a total of 785, but what with sickness, guards on barriers, cattle guards, etc., we could never turn out more than 550 for any offensive measures against the Boers, and as they were all mounted infantry they were really not of much use.

Next came the artillery:

Diamond Fields Artillery.....	118
Royal Artillery.....	95
In all	213.

Then the infantry:

Town Guard.....	2,794
Lancashires, roughly.....	500
Kimberley Rifles.....	380
A total of	3,674.

Out of the total number of available defenders (4,672) only about 600 were regulars, or 900, including the police, and we feel proud to think that our own men have done so much towards the defence of our town.

But the two men of whom we are most proud are Colonel Kekewich and Mr. Rhodes—of the colonel for the even-handed justice with which he has administered everything for the benefit of rich and poor alike, and of Mr. Rhodes for the magnificent way in which he has acted as a guardian angel to us all.











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